This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Princeton University Library
32101 066128248

RECAP

Digitized by Google

5012
.982
ANNEX LIB.

Library of
Princeton University.

From the Library of
Samuel Miller, LL.D.
In Memory of
Judge Samuel Miller Breckinridge, LL.D. '50.
Presented by
Samuel Miller Breckinridge Long, '03.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

WORKS

OF

LEONARD WOODS, D. D.,

LATELY PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDOVER.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

ANDOVER:
PRINTED BY JOHN D. FLAGG.
1850.

Digitized by Google

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY PAID

(RECAP)

5012
.982
v.2

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1849, by
LEONARD WOODS, D. D.,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of Massachusetts.

UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
PRINCETON, N.J.

ANDOVER:
JOHN D. FLAGG,
STEREOTYPER AND PRINTER.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

LECTURE XLII.

PAGE

DIVINE PROVIDENCE. STATEMENT AND PROOF OF THE DOCTRINE. PROVIDENCE PARTICULAR AND UNIVERSAL, — RELATES TO THE NATURAL AND MORAL WORLD. THE ATTRIBUTES OF PROVIDENCE, ... 1—13

The doctrine is that all things are directed and controlled by God, 1
—— proved from his attributes, ... 1
—— from experience, ... 2
Providence particular and universal, ... 4
An objection forestalled, ... 5
A general Providence implies a particular Providence, . . 8
—— important to intelligent beings, ... 8
—— asserted in the Scriptures, ... 9
Divine Providence benevolent, ... 10
—— just, wise, and powerful, ... 11
—— manifestation of holiness, ... 12

LECTURE XLIII.

A PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY EXAMINED, ... 14—24

The theory stated by Godwin, Knapp, Price, Cowper, etc. . . 15
Argument against this theory, ... 17
Appeal to Christians, ... 22

LECTURE XLIV.

THE PARTICULAR THEORY CONTINUED, ... 25—35

Appeal to Scripture, ... 25
Oriental idiom considered, ... 27
Miracles, ... 28
Argument from the duty of prayer, ... 29

JUN 26 1901

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLV.

THE THEORY FURTHER EXAMINED, ... 36—55

1. Did its advocates derive it from the Scriptures? 37
2. How do they know the truth of the theory? 37
3. Do they infer it from anything which takes place? . . . 38
4. Has it any advantages? 38

Argument from the mechanism of a clock, remarked upon by Dr. Clarke, ... 40
Divine Providence includes the powers and laws of nature, . . 42
The powers and laws of nature dependent on God, ... 44
Two agencies, that of creatures and that of God — their relation to each other, ... 46
Views of Dr. Day, ... 48
Practical reflections:
1. Easy to avoid mistakes, ... 50
2. Difference between rational piety and enthusiasm, . . . 50

LECTURE XLVI.

MORAL AGENCY. PROPER MODE OF INQUIRY. ULTIMATE STANDARD OF TRUTH, ... 56—66

Man's moral agency assumed, ... 58
Meaning of moral agency, ... 59
Ultimate standard of moral distinctions, ... 59
—— founded in the constitution of man, ... 62
Appeal to this standard by inspired men, ... 64
Expressions of Dr. Brown referred to, ... 65

LECTURE XLVII.

DIFFERENT STATES OF CONSCIENCE IN RELATION TO MORAL AGENCY. AMBIGUITY OF WORDS. THE TEST APPLIED TO BODILY ACTION, ... 67—76

Dormancy of conscience, ... 67
1. Conscience not wholly inactive, ... 68
2. Will finally awake, ... 68
Ambiguity of words, ... 70
The standard applied to bodily actions, ... 73

LECTURE XLVIII.

THE TEST APPLIED TO OUR SENSATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS; TO ACTS MERELY INTELLECTUAL; AND TO VOLITIONS, 77—88

The test applied to sensations, ... 77
—— to intellectual acts, ... 78

Digitized by Google

The test applied to volition, ... 80
—— different senses of the word, ... 80
—— explained by Locke, ... 81
Is volition in the restricted sense a moral act? 83
Mental acts, good or evil in themselves, ... 86

LECTURE XLIX.

THE AFFECTIONS IN THEMSELVES MORALLY GOOD OR EVIL. LAWS OF THE AFFECTIONS. THEIR CONNECTION WITH THE INTELLECT, AND WITH THE WILL, ... 89—102

The standard applied to the affections, ... 89
Appeal to moral sense, ... 90
Scripture view, ... 91
Laws of the mind in regard to the affections, ... 92
—— their connection with the intellect, ... 93
—— with volition, ... 93
Language of Paul, Rom. 7: 15—23, Charnock's views, . . . 94
The affections govern the will, ... 95
Quotation from Mackintosh, ... 97
Practical considerations as to the influence of the will, . . 98
Quotation from Whately, ... 99
Our voluntary agency important in the culture of moral affections, ... 100

LECTURE L.

CONNECTION OF PRESENT AFFECTIONS WITH PRECEDING AFFECTIONS. PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE VIEWS WHICH HAVE BEEN ADVANCED RESPECTING THE CONNECTION OF THE AFFECTIONS WITH INTELLECT, WITH VOLITIONS, AND WITH PRECEDING AFFECTIONS, ... 103—113

Connection of present affection with the preceding, ... 103
Aptitude of the mind to particular affections, ... 104
Natural tendency of affection to increase this aptitude, . . 105
This tendency sometimes modified, ... 106
A mistake corrected, ... 107
Practical use of the connection of the affections with intellect, . 109
—— with the will, ... 110
—— with previous affections, ... 111

LECTURE LI.

ON WHAT PRINCIPLE WE PREDICT FUTURE AFFECTIONS, 114—125

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LII.

MORAL NECESSITY, WHAT IT IMPLIES. CONSIDERATIONS IN ITS FAVOR, ... 126—137

Moral necessity explained, ... 126
The doctrine rests upon facts, ... 129
To be governed by motives essential to rational beings, . . 130
—— acknowledged in our practice, ... 130
—— the divine conduct, ... 131
Influence of motives uniform, ... 131

LECTURE LIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF MOTIVES, OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE, 138—145

Influence of objective motives depends on the subjective, . . 138
Our own experience, ... 139
Our influence over the affections, ... 142

LECTURE LIV.

DO MOTIVES INFLUENCE MEN NECESSARILY? SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATION. NATURE OF THE NECESSITY. OBJECTION FROM A CASE OF INDIFFERENCE CONSIDERED, . . 146—155

Necessity explained, ... 146
Supposed case of indifference answered, ... 148
Objection that moral necessity is inconsistent with moral agency answered, ... 152
Complete influence of motives considered 153

LECTURE LV.

DIFFICULTY AS TO MORAL INABILITY CONSIDERED. ALSO AS TO THE DIVINE PURPOSES, OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD, AND THE WORK OF HIS SPIRIT IN SANCTIFICATION, . . 156—163

1. Inability, ... 156
2. Divine purposes, ... 158
3. Our dependence, ... 161
4. Divine influence in sanctification, ... 162

LECTURE LVI.

MORAL AGENCY CONTINUES THROUGH ALL CHANGES OF CHARACTER. THE NARRATIVE GEN. III. A SATISFACTORY ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST HUMAN SIN, ... 164—172

Moral agency unimpaired and uninterrupted, ... 164
Narrative on Gen. iii. satisfactory, ... 169

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LVII.

THE INABILITY OF SINNERS TO OBEY THE DIVINE COMMANDS, ... 173—181

Testimony of Scripture, ... 174
—— applied to Christians, ... 176
We should follow the Scriptures, ... 178
Does the present time require new modes of instruction ? . . 180

LECTURE LVIII.

THE SINNER'S INABILITY EXPLAINED, ... 182—191

Not every kind of inability, ... 182
Scripture requires the sinner to obey, ... 183
Nature of the inability indicated by the texts referred to, . . 184
Simplicity of the sacred writers, ... 187
Quotation from Smalley, ... 188
Similar language used in other cases, ... 190

LECTURE LIX.

RECAPITULATION. PRACTICAL BEARINGS OF THE SUBJECT, 192—200

A practical difficulty, ... 193
Quotation from Dr. Emmons, ... 195
May natural ability overcome moral inability ? 197
—— not adapted to this purpose, ... 199

LECTURE LX.

MAN'S DEPRAVITY. PRELIMINARY REMARKS, . . . 201—209

No presumption against the doctrine from the divine character, . 201
—— nor from the fact that God created man in his own image, . 204
Spiritual blindness hinders men from understanding the doctrine, ... 205
Men in their natural state have amiable and useful qualities, . 206
No philosophical theory free from difficulty, ... 208

LECTURE LXI.

EVIDENCE OF DEPRAVITY FROM HUMAN CONDUCT. EVIDENCE FROM SCRIPTURE OF ITS UNIVERSALITY, ... 210—229

Evidence from human conduct, ... 210
This evidence various and constant, ... 211

Digitized by Google

Quotation from Dr. Beecher, ... 213
—— from Chalmers, ... 213
—— from Dr. George Payne, ... 214
Proofs from Scripture of universal sinfulness, ... 216
Passages expressly asserting it, ... 217
—— setting forth the sinfulness of individuals and nations, . 218
Scripture representations that imply universal depravity, . . 226

LECTURE LXII.

DEPRAVITY OF MAN TOTAL, ... 230—235

Total depravity explained, ... 230
—— not disproved by man's amiable and useful qualities, . . 231
Proved from Scripture, ... 233
—— from Christian experience, ... 234

LECTURE LXIII.

DEPRAVITY NATIVE. EXPLANATION OF TERMS. MARKS OF OTHER THINGS WHICH ARE NATIVE. THESE MARKS PROVE NATIVE DEPRAVITY, ... 236—249

Held universally, ... 236
Explanation of native, ... 237
Universality one mark of what is native, ... 238
—— developing itself in early life, ... 239
—— not owing to any change subsequent to birth, . . . 239
—— operating spontaneously, ... 239
—— hard to be overcome, ... 239
—— we can predict that it will act itself out, ... 240
—— applied to depravity, ... 241
Objection from the case of Adam answered, ... 247

LECTURE LXIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF NATIVE DEPRAVITY CONTINUED. SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE. CONSEQUENCES OF DENYING THE DOCTRINE, ... 250—270

Appeal to Scripture, ... 251
Rom. 5: 12—19, ... 251
Do the consequences of Adam's offence come upon any who are entirely sinless? 252
John 3: 6, ... 255
Eph. 2: 3, and Gal. 2: 15, ... 258
Psalm 51: 3, ... 259
Suppose we had the same evidence of the opposite fact, . . 262

Digitized by Google

Consequences of denying the doctrine, ... 263
Case of infant children, ... 267

LECTURE LXV.

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO NATIVE DEPRAVITY INADMISSIBLE, 271—283

Common objections inadmissible, ... 271
Marks of native depravity examined, ... 274
Important practical principle involved, ... 281

LECTURE LXVI.

OBJECTIONS TO NATIVE DEPRAVITY PARTICULARLY EXAMINED, ... 284—303

From the moral perfections of God, ... 285
Inconsistent with our being accountable agents, ... 294

LECTURE LXVII.

EXERCISES OF DEPRAVED AFFECTION COMMENCE EARLY, 304—318

Assembly's Shorter Catechism, ... 316
Levi paid tithes in Abraham, ... 317

LECTURE LXVIII.

INNATE DISPOSITION OR PROPENSITY TO SIN, ... 319—344

Quotations from Hopkins, Dwight, and others, ... 324
Question between Dr. John Taylor and Edwards, ... 326
Disposition to sin taken away by regeneration, ... 337
Quotation from Locke, ... 339
What will become of human beings who died before the commencement of moral action? 340
Two views harmonize, ... 342

LECTURE LXIX.

REMARKS ON THE WORDS INNATE, TRANSMITTED, HEREDITARY, CONSTITUTIONAL, AND IMPUTED, ... 345—354

Innate, ... 346
Hereditary, ... 346
Imputation, ... 351
Propagated, ... 352
Constitutional, ... 353

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXX.

EVERY OTHER THEORY AS MUCH ENCUMBERED WITH DIFFICULTIES AS THE ORTHODOX, ... 355—369

Theory of a mixed character in man, ... 356
—— of Dr. John Taylor, ... 357
Another theory, ... 358
Charge of physical depravity, ... 361
Another theory, ... 363
Theory of a preëxistent state of the soul, from Prof. Müller, . 363
Practical tendency of the doctrine of native depravity, exemplified, ... 367

LECTURE LXXI.

REMARKS ON COLERIDGE'S VIEWS OF ORIGINAL SIN, . 370—387

Proper mode of teaching the doctrine of depravity, . . 382—387

LECTURE LXXII.

THE ATONEMENT A SUBJECT OF PURE REVELATION, . 388—397

Human reason could not discover that God would in any way provide salvation, ... 389
—— could not discover in what way he would do this, . . 390
—— could not determine what would be the results, . . 391
Human reason not set aside, ... 393
How reason should be employed, ... 394
Hints to direct our inquiries and prevent mistakes, . . . 396

LECTURE LXXIII.

TEXTS WHICH TEACH THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT, FIRST AND SECOND CLASSES, ... 398—406

First class teaching that Christ is the Redeemer, ... 399
Second class teaching that forgiveness comes through the death of Christ, ... 399
Objection considered, ... 400

LECTURE LXXIV.

THIRD, FOURTH, FIFTH, SIXTH, SEVENTH, CLASSES OF TEXTS, 407—419

Circumstance that the suffering Saviour was perfectly holy, . 408
How to account for his sufferings, ... 409

Digitized by Google

Third class of texts — Christ died for our sins, ... 411
Meaning of these texts, ... 411
Fourth class — Christ died for sinners, ... 414
These texts explained, ... 415
The idea of substitution not derived from a particular word, . 416
Fifth class — Christ a ransom, ... 418
Sixth class — Gal. 3: 13, Christ made a curse, ... 418
Seventh class — Christ bore our sins, ... 419

LECTURE LXXV.

EIGHTH, NINTH, TENTH, AND ELEVENTH CLASSES. A DIFFICULTY AS TO THE DIFFERENT ENDS OF CHRIST'S DEATH, 420—431

Eighth class — Christ taking away sin, ... 420
Ninth class — Christ a sin offering, ... 421
Tenth class — Christ a propitiation, ... 423
Eleventh class — Christ reconciles us to God, ... 423
Objection, that Scripture mentions other ends of Christ's death, . 425
Answered, ... 428

LECTURE LXXVI.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE ENDS OF CHRIST'S DEATH HARMONIOUS. METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE USED BY THE ORTHODOX, AND BY THE SACRED WRITERS, RESPECTING GOD AS A JUST MORAL GOVERNOR. OBJECTIONS AGAINST IT CONSIDERED, ... 432—443

How far Scripture language is metaphorical, ... 434
Metaphorical language used for impression, ... 438
Why does God inflict punishment? 438
Objection of Unitarians considered, ... 440

LECTURE LXXVII.

NECESSITY OF ATONEMENT ARGUED FROM VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS, ... 444—455

1. Atonement actually made, ... 444
2. Scriptures assert the necessity, ... 447
3. Consideration of divine character and government, . . 449

LECTURE LXXVIII.

SUBSTITUTION OR VICARIOUS SUFFERINGS PARTICULARLY CONSIDERED, ... 456—464

Atonement defined, ... 461

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXIX.

PROPITIATION. SATISFACTION OF JUSTICE. DID CHRIST ANSWER THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW AND ENDURE ITS PENALTY? DID HE PAY THE DEBT OF SINNERS? DID HE CANCEL THE CLAIMS OF THE LAW? . . . . . 465—477

1. Propitiation explained, ... 465
2. Satisfaction to divine justice, ... 467
3. Did Christ endure the penalty of the law? 471
4. Did Christ pay the debt of sinners? 474
5. Did Christ cancel the claims of the law? 476

LECTURE LXXX.

WAS THE DEATH OF CHRIST A FULL EQUIVALENT AND LEGAL SUBSTITUTE FOR THE PUNISHMENT OF SINNERS? WAS CHRIST OUR REPRESENTATIVE? WERE OUR SINS IMPUTED TO HIM? WAS HIS ACTIVE OBEDIENCE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE ATONEMENT? . . . . . 478—489

6. Full equivalent and legal substitute, ... 478
7. The law place of sinners, ... 479
8. Christ our representative, ... 479
9. Were our sins imputed to Christ? 480
10. Active obedience part of the atonement, ... 482

LECTURE LXXXI.

IS THE ATONEMENT GENERAL OR PARTICULAR? . . . 490—504

LECTURE LXXXII.

REMARKS ON THE CONTROVERSY, ... 505—521

LECTURE LXXXIII.

REMARKS ON THE VIEWS OF COLERIDGE, ... 522—535

LECTURE LXXXIV.

REGENERATION. ITS NATURE, ... 536—549

LECTURE LXXXV.

REGENERATION. ITS CAUSE OR AUTHOR. THE WORK MANIFESTS GREAT POWER; IS SOVEREIGN; AND IS SPECIAL AND SUPERNATURAL, ... 550—563

LECTURE LXXXVI.

REGENERATION NOT OWING TO ANYTHING IN FALLEN MAN, 564—575

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLII.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE. STATEMENT AND PROOF OF THE DOCTRINE. PROVIDENCE PARTICULAR AND UNIVERSAL,—RELATES TO THE NATURAL AND MORAL WORLD. THE ATTRIBUTES OF PROVIDENCE.

THE doctrine of divine providence is, that *all things are sustained, directed and controlled by God.* "Through him are all things." Correspondent with this is the teaching of the Assembly's Catechism. "The works of God's providence are his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions."

The reality of God's providence has been considered not only by Christian divines, but by heathen philosophers, as resulting from his attributes. If God is infinitely intelligent and powerful and good, he certainly will take care of the works of his hand. The same benevolence which prompted him to create the world, must prompt him to preserve and govern it. The same wisdom which contrived so wonderful and glorious a system, can and will direct and control it. And the same power which first brought all things into being, can with perfect ease and unfailing efficiency sustain and overrule them. To suppose that God would create such a world and such a universe, and then suffer it to fall into non-existence, or neglect to take care of it, would be to suppose God destitute of immutable perfection. If we should be told, that God will tomorrow withdraw his attention and care from the creatures he has made, and have nothing more to do with them, leaving them and all their concerns to take their own course, either to cease to exist, or to exist, if they can, independently of him;

Digitized by Google

should we not cry out in distress, — can it be that our glorious Creator will do this? Can he who is infinitely benovolent, cease to exercise his benevolence? Can the only wise God cease to show his wisdom? Can omnipotence cease to act? Why should God have given being to such a world, unless he meant to preserve and govern it? Would it be an act of goodness to create the universe and then leave it in such a forlorn condition?—The thought that God will neglect to preserve and govern the world which he has made, would fill us with inexpressible terror and dismay. We could find no resting place. All would be desolation. And those who have the highest degree of reason and benevolence, would be the most wretched. We come then quickly to this result, that if God does indeed possess, as we know he does, those perfections which we are wont to ascribe to him, he surely will preserve and govern all his creatures and all their actions.

But the providence of God, which thus follows from his attributes, is also taught by experience. Even the short acquaintance which we have had with the natural and moral world, furnishes abundant proof of the sustaining and controlling agency of God. In the heavens above and in the earth beneath, in land and water and air, in the light of day, and in the darkness of night, in the revolving seasons, in vegetables, animals and minerals, we see constant displays of boundless wisdom, power and goodness. The objects of nature around us and above us address themselves directly to our understandings and hearts, declaring in language which cannot be mistaken, that God upholds and guides the universe. Who can behold the order and harmony of the creation, the marks of contrivance every where apparent, the adaptedness of means to ends, and the subserviency of all things to the improvement and well-being of man, without recognizing the constant operation of a presiding intelligence and a diffusive benevolence? And who can behold the mighty operations which are going on in the visible creation, without recognizing the hand of omnipotence? The manner in which we are continued in life, the delicate structure of our frame, the dangers to which we find ourselves constantly exposed, the deep consciousness we have of

Digitized by Google

our own weakness, and our utter insufficiency for our own safety and happiness, must indelibly impress the sentiment upon us, that in God we live and move and have our being. The doctrine is brought out to view by the common course of human affairs in societies, and in the life of individuals. Read the history of Joseph, of Moses, of David, of Esther, and of other persons as set forth in the Scriptures. Do you not see that the circumstances and events of their lives were all shaped by the hand of God? Do you not observe, every where, the marks of his all-directing agency? The histories of these individuals is only a specimen of the history of human life. Your life and mine exhibit as real evidence of God's providence, as the life of Joseph, Moses or David. We must have been very inattentive observers of the events which have come before us, if we have overlooked the divine hand — if we have not clearly seen that the daily current of our affairs depends on a wisdom and power above our own. The plans which our wisdom contrives, are often baffled. The objects which we design and expect to accomplish, fail. Events occur which were not expected or thought of by us. Blessings come to us unsought. Evils befall us which we did not fear. And those evils, against which we most earnestly endeavor to guard ourselves, we find it impossible to avoid. It stands before us in evidence as clear as noon-day brightness, that it is not in man to direct his own steps. We have no power to stop or turn aside the wheels of providence. Before the power which governs human affairs, our power fades away. And in comparison with the wisdom which presides over us, our wisdom is folly. In proportion as we obtain just views of ourselves and of our condition, we become distrustful of our own plans, and feel that we are insufficient to guide our own pursuits, or protect our own interests. This is a lesson which we are learning continually. Common experience brings us into contact with a power and wisdom above us, the influence of which we should always desire as a blessing of infinite value.

The evidence of a divine providence over societies and nations is equally remarkable. We may sometimes be ready to think

Digitized by Google

that the care which God exercised over the posterity of Jacob and of Esau is an exception to the general course of things; that in those cases, God had a special object in view, and accordingly interfered in a manner entirely different from what is common; that in ordinary cases, he lets men alone, leaving them, for the most part at least, to take care of themselves, independently of any higher agency. But if the history of our own country and of other countries should be written truly and fully, the hand of God would be every where apparent. You could not avoid the belief, that the events which have taken place, though involving human agency, have been under a divine direction, and have all been made subservient to the objects of divine wisdom. In the course of our Revolutionary struggles, there were many instances, in which our public affairs, beyond all expectation, and independently of human contrivance, took such a favorable turn, that the whole community were constrained to acknowledge the hand of God. And if we had a discernment sufficiently clear, we should see that, in the strictest sense, God judgeth among the nations, and reigns in righteousness and in mercy over all the earth.

But to exhibit the argument from experience and from fact in all its force, would be to give a particular and complete history of all the events that have taken place since the creation of the world, relative to individuals, families, societies and nations. All that I now aim to do is, to turn your thoughts to the subject, and to induce you to ponder well the evidence of a superintending providence, arising from your own experience and observation, and also from the history of events written by inspired and uninspired men.

The doctrine which I maintain and which is the doctrine commonly received by Christians is, that the providence of God is not only general, but *particular* and *universal;* that it reaches to all his creatures and all their actions. This doctrine is manifestly of deep interest. It teaches that the king eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise God, is constantly near to us, and present with us, and present with the whole creation, every where and at all times exercising and manifesting his glorious perfections. Let

Digitized by Google

us seriously ponder the evidence which shows, that this doctrine, so interesting and desirable, is founded in truth.

I shall here forestall an objection which is apt to arise in the minds of contemplative men, against the doctrine of a *particular and universal* providence. It is alleged, that for God to concern himself with all the little things which exist, with all the little events which take place, and all the trifling, insignificant actions of rational and irrational creatures, would be derogatory to his dignified and exalted character. This objection is specious; and it may be no easy matter to rid our minds entirely of its influence. The chief difficulty will be found to arise from supposing an analogy which does not exist, between the agency of God and the agency of man. As it would be burdensome to us, and would be incompatible with our wisdom, and would hinder us from accomplishing higher objects, to concern ourselves continually with what we call small and trifling affairs; it is supposed that any thing like this would be burdensome to the Supreme Being, and would hinder him from giving proper attention to objects of higher moment. But in all this we forget, that God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. It results from our limited faculties, that we can attend to but a few things at once, and consequently are obliged to make a selection of those things which seem to us the most important, and to pass by the rest. There are various little things with which we cannot consistently concern ourselves, because they do not fall within our province, and ought not to occupy the time which is due to other matters. But you will observe that, when any of those little things become really important to us, then, however little they may be, and however insignificant they may have appeared to us before, we find it to be proper to concern ourselves with them. If you are exposed to an insect, however small, that you know to be venomous, you take care to avoid it. If you have inhaled any small substance into your lungs, you take pains to free yourself from it. Nor do you ever feel it to be degrading to your dignity, or in any way inconsistent with your duty, to concern yourself immediately with such a small matter. If the most exalted personage on earth,

Digitized by Google

even while engaged in business of the greatest moment, should in such circumstances stop to concern himself with so small a matter; would it be derogatory to his character? We attend every day to many small affairs, which would be quite below our notice, were they not important to our well-being, but which, being thus important, have a just claim upon our regard. You see then that the objection has little force even in regard to *us;* for the moment any thing however small in itself becomes of importance to us, that moment it ceases to be below our notice, and it would be a dishonor and a sin to neglect it. Now if we saw that other little things and that all little things were in any way important to us, or to our fellow creatures, it would certainly be right for us to give attention to them to the extent of our power. To do so would be an honor to us, so far as it would not require us to overlook things more important. Of what weight then is the objection which is founded on the supposition, that God is limited in his understanding and power, as we are? Remove this misconception of the divine character, and the objection loses all its force. We cannot measure God's attributes by our own. Because *we* cannot know all things, and be in all places at the same time, it does not follow that God cannot. Because our attention is necessarily limited to a few things, it does not follow that God's attention is thus limited. All things are present to his view. He sees at once the great and the small, the distant and the near. He knows the whole universe more perfectly than we know the smallest part of it. He observes all the thoughts and feelings of all intelligent beings in heaven and earth far more perfectly, than we observe any one of the thoughts and feelings of our own minds. His attention to the greatest objects in the universe does not interfere at all with his attention to the least. And his attention to the least does not interfere with his attention to the greatest. To each single thing in the creation he attends as perfectly, as though nothing else existed, and as though that one thing were the only object of his thoughts. And this perfect view which God constantly takes of all creatures and all events through the whole extent of the universe, instead of being wearisome, or requiring anything like what

Digitized by Google

we call effort, is rest and blessedness to his infinite understanding.

The same is true of his power. His agency in upholding and governing all things costs him nothing like labor in us. It is perfectly easy for God to exercise his omnipotence. He can put forth as perfect an agency in the greatest things, as though he did not act at all in the smallest. And he can act as perfectly in the smallest, as though he did not act at all in the greatest. Hence I cannot admit, that the objection we are considering has any weight. The exercise of a particular and universal providence is every way suited to the perfections of God. If he sees that the smallest things in existence are of any consequence, as parts of the system of the universe, they are not beneath his notice; and it is not a dishonor but an honor to him to extend his care over them. And if any one affirms that those things which are small in themselves are of no use as parts of a great system, he is chargeable with the impiety and presumption of setting up his own judgment in opposition to the judgment of God. As to the allegation that little things are below the notice of God — who are they that make this allegation? Are not all the men on earth little creatures, exceedingly little, in comparison with the beings above them? With all our proud and lofty feelings, we are far more inferior to the Lord Jesus Christ, than the least of all insects are to us. If then we insist upon the objection above stated, let us carry it through and say, that God is so great and exalted, and we are so small and insignificant, that it must be degrading to his dignity to stoop down so low as to notice us and to take care of our little affairs. Indeed, if we consider the glorious character of God, and his great and marvellous works in the unnumbered worlds above us, and beyond the reach of our vision, we may well be filled with admiration, and exclaim with the Psalmist; "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" God does really humble himself to regard the greatest created beings on earth or in heaven. But this is no objection, for infinite condescension is one of the perfections of God.

Digitized by Google

But the objection under consideration lies with as much force against God's work in creation, as in providence. Were not all the little things which exist created by God? Did he not make the worms of the dust, and the smallest insects, and all the minute particles of sand, air and water? And who will say, that the creation of these was beneath the exalted character of God? How then is it unworthy of his character to extend his care over them? To say that anything in existence is of no use whatever, and is unworthy of God's notice, would be to impeach his wisdom as Creator. For surely God knew what was worthy of him before he created the world, and when he created it. And if he had seen that any of the little things now existing were absolutely useless, and in no way deserving of his notice, would he have exerted his power to bring them into existence? But if God manifested his perfections in giving them existence at first, he manifests his perfections equally in continuing their existence.

But to obviate still further the objection against the doctrine of a *particular* and *universal* providence, it is important to show that a general providence, which is so readily admitted, necessarily implies a particular providence. A general providence is a providence over the world as a whole. But is not the world, as a whole, made up of parts? And is it possible to take care of the whole without taking care of the parts which constitute it? You admit that divine providence extends generally over water, earth and air. But these consist of parts larger and smaller. And if God does not concern himself with the smaller parts, how can he concern himself with the larger objects which they constitute? It is manifestly impossible for him to do the one without doing the other. The same is true respecting the animal and vegetable kingdoms. If God takes care of these as a whole, he must take care of all the species of animals and vegetables from the highest to the lowest, and of particular animals and vegetables, and of all their constituent parts.

This view of divine providence is indescribably important in respect to *intelligent* and *moral* beings. You admit that God has an agency in regard to the great and general concerns of man-

Digitized by Google

kind; that he rules among the nations, superintends their weighty public measures, and takes care of their more important interests. But how can there be such a general providence, without a particular providence? How can God exercise his righteous dominion over a nation, without exercising it over the individuals who compose the nation? And how can he superintend the weighty public interests of the nation, without superintending whatever goes to constitute those interests? It is impossible. A particular providence, in the most perfect sense, is involved in a general providence. And if we do not hold to a particular providence, we cannot consistently hold to a divine providence in any sense. And as a particular providence is necessarily involved in a general providence, all the arguments which prove a general providence, do, at the same time, prove a particular providence.

The doctrine of a particular providence is largely asserted and exemplified in the Scriptures. This is the argument on which we are chiefly to rely. The Bible teaches that God doeth his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; that he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that his mercies are over all his works; that he is every where present; that in him we live and move and have our being; and that of him, and through him, and to him are all things. God's providence is represented as extending to all our actions and all our personal concerns. "Man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." God fixes the bounds of our life and the place of our abode. He gives us our daily bread, our health, our domestic and social comforts, our religious privileges, and all that constitutes our goodly heritage. Jesus has plainly taught us what concern God has in sustaining and governing the world, and how particular and constant his agency is. He says, God feeds the ravens and young lions — takes care of sparrows, clothes the lilies and numbers the hairs of our heads. The Scriptures from the beginning to the end teach that God superintends and directs the affairs of families and individuals; that the minutest circumstances are ordered by

Digitized by Google

his providence, so as to render them subservient to his designs; that when favors come to individual persons, or families, or larger societies, they come from God, and are expressions of his goodness; and that, when greater or smaller calamities come, they are sent by God as righteous judgments. The whole compass of human thoughts, designs, pursuits, characters, interests, enjoyments and sufferings are represented as being under the eye of God, and as controlled by his wisdom and power. There is no exception to this. According to the Bible, there is no limitation of the providence of God. It reaches all things great and small, both in the natural and in the spiritual world. There is no conceivable way in which the sacred writers could have more strongly asserted or more clearly illustrated the particular and universal providence of God, than they have done. And if the doctrine is not true, prophets and apostles, and Christ himself were greatly mistaken.

Such briefly are the arguments in proof of a general and particular divine providence. Consider now the attributes which belong to it.

1. Divine providence is *benevolent*. In other words; God in his providence exercises his benevolence. He over-rules all things for the welfare of his moral empire. In many instances his providence accomplishes good *directly*. In other cases, the good aimed at is accomplished by means of that, which is not in itself a good. This is the case of all the afflictions of God's people. In themselves they are not joyous but grievous. But they work the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And all good men have reason to say, it is good for us that we have been afflicted. The punishment inflicted on the wicked will certainly answer important ends in exhibiting the holy character of God, in supporting the honor of his law, and in discountenancing sin. Even sin itself, so far as God suffers it to take place, will be over-ruled for good. His providential agency respecting it is perfectly benevolent. It is true of all the moral evil which exists, that God means it for good. All his dispensations, however dark and inscrutable for a time, are but the actings of infinite goodness.

Digitized by Google

2. Providence is *just*. The plan of it is such, that sin will be stigmatized and sinners punished, while holiness will be honored, and those who are holy rewarded. The work of retribution is commenced here, though not completed. The events of providence make it perfectly manifest that there is a God who judgeth in the earth.

3. The providence of God displays his *wisdom*. The more we attend to the divine operations in the natural world, the more are we struck with the consummate wisdom which is every where manifested in adapting means to the accomplishment of good ends. But this adaptation is still more admirable in the moral world. In unnumbered instances, the end accomplished is directly and manifestly connected with the means. And a further observation will show, that the end thus accomplished, becomes a means to another end, and this last to another, and so on continually. This chain of events, this concatenation of means and ends may be less visible in the moral world than in the natural. But when discovered, it is far more wonderful; and it often leads us to exclaim, "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" This is most of all the case when the ends to be answered are distant in time, and when the arrangements of providence seem at present to look another way. This was remarkably the case in the family of Jacob. For a long time, the events which took place were calamitous and distressing. But when you follow the history, you see not only the end accomplished, but the striking adaptation of the arrangements of providence to that very end. This subserviency of events, which are in themselves dark and deplorable, to important and often very distant results, this bringing of good out of evil contrary to all human intentions and human expectations, shows the far-reaching and unsearchable wisdom of God.

4. In divine providence there is a constant manifestation of *power*. To *preserve* is as much the work of omnipotence, as to *create*, — to *continue* existence as to give it at first. But it is not merely by upholding things in existence that God continually shows his power. He does it also in so directing and governing all his creatures and all their actions, as to compass his own right-

Digitized by Google

eous and benevolent ends. How vast is the work of giving motion and direction to the immense bodies which belong to the solar system! But the solar system is only a very small part of the creation. Who can think without amazement of the power exercised in efficiently superintending the millions of worlds in the starry heavens!

One of the ways in which God displays his power is, in overcoming resistance. No language can set forth the strength and the countless forms of opposition, constantly made by wicked beings against the righteous and benevolent providence of God. But what is all this opposition before his infinite power? In a moment, and with perfect ease, he can frustrate all the efforts of his enemies. The lifting up of his hand confounds them. His frown fills them with dismay, and prostrates them in the dust. In many instances, it pleases God in his providence to suffer his enemies for a time to prosper, and even to exult and triumph, as though they were conquerors. And then when they stand forth in all their might, with the skill acquired by long experience, and flushed with the hope of victory; the Almighty utters his voice, and they are scattered and put to shame. So a mighty prince, who knows his own resources, and his superiority over his enemies, sometimes suffers them to come into the very midst of his kingdom, and within sight of his army, so that he can show the world with what ease he can conquer, and how unreasonable and hazardous it is for his enemies to rise up against him.

Finally, in the providence of God, there is a constant manifestation of *holiness*. I shall here present only one particular view of the subject. This world is full of moral evil. Except the little holiness which the grace of God has produced in the hearts of his people, all is defiled with sin. Now it is such a world as this, that is the theatre of God's providence. He upholds and governs a world of sinners. Even the impure and unholy live and move and have their being in God. But God is perfectly pure. Those who are polluted are always near to him, and he is near to them. His eye beholds them. His hand feeds them. But no

Digitized by Google

pollution touches his holy nature. Among us moral diseases are contagious. We contract defilements from the company of those who are defiled. A good man's virtue must have acquired an uncommon degree of firmness, if he can be conversant with men of the world, and the affairs of the world, without contracting a stain. See here the immaculate purity of God. He has a continual agency in the midst of sinful men, but his agency is perfectly holy. He acts in a world of polluted beings. But no pollution adheres to him. Though he is so near to the wicked, and in the exercise of his knowledge and power is constantly present with them, still his character is unchangeably holy. He has no fellowship with sinful beings, and as to feeling, character and design, and the mode of exercising his attributes, he is infinitely distant from them. A wall of adamant could not so effectually separate us from the wicked, or shield us from being polluted with their wickedness, as God is separated and shielded by his own holy nature. To him there is no need of such a separating wall. There is no need of his fleeing away to a distant world, or of shutting out this scene of moral impurity from his sight. His own perfection, his own immutable holiness, secures him forever against any contagion from the moral diseases which prevail among his creatures. And while he will forever be where wicked beings are, he will be there as a sin-hating God; he will be among sinners and near them, to take terrible vengeance upon them for their wickedness, and to show that he is the Holy one of Israel.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLIII.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE. A PARTICULAR PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY STATED AND EXAMINED.

THE doctrine of divine providence has ever been the subject of intense thought and discussion among intelligent men. And in all ages, objections have been urged against it. But those objections which have at first appeared formidable have, on a more mature consideration generally lost their force. It is on this as on every other subject; the truth has nothing to fear from free and impartial inquiry. If men examine any subject in a right manner, and with prayer to God for divine guidance, they will be gradually freed from what is erroneous in their apprehensions, and the light of truth will shine in their minds more and more clearly.

The doctrine of divine providence opens a large field before us, which we can survey only in parts. And if, as we proceed, doubts and difficulties arise in your minds respecting what I advance, my only request is, that you would suspend your judgment, till you have gone along with me through a careful investigation. And here let me advertise you, that in the treatment of this subject, which holds so prominent a place in the system of Theology, I have no novelties to introduce. My views, as you will find, are in accordance not only with our Seminary creed, but with the creeds of the great body of evangelical divines and churches in Europe and America, and what is far more important, with the teachings of the holy Scriptures.

My present object is, to examine with special care, a particular theory which has sometimes been maintained by speculative phi-

Digitized by Google

losophers, and which is apt at times to suggest itself to the minds of all thinking men, in contradiction to the doctrine of providence as commonly held. The theory to which I refer is stated by Dr. Godwin in his able work against Atheism. After careful reflection he comes to this conclusion, which is the one commonly adopted, namely; "that all things in heaven or earth, however great or minute, — that all creatures and all events are under the superintendence and control of God." He then mentions two different views which have been taken of this superintendence. One of these views is the common one, and the one adopted by Godwin himself, namely, that *there is an immediate and constant superintendence exercised over the whole creation, and that what we term the laws of nature are but the operations of divine power in a regular and uniform manner.* And this is the exact idea of the laws of nature which has been held by the best writers from Sir Isaac Newton to the present time. The other view he mentions is the one now to be examined. "It is conceived by some," he says, "that the Creator, having brought all things into being, gave to universal nature laws, by which, as a machine once set in motion, it goes on without any subsequent act of power or interference of its Maker." Dr. Knapp, in his theology, explains the theory much in the same manner. "Some," he says, "have maintained, that the creatures of God act immediately in and through themselves, in the exercise of the powers with which they have been once endowed by the Creator, and independently of him. They have compared the movements and alterations which appear in the creation to those of a machine (e. g. a clock) which being once made and wound up, goes for a time of itself, without the farther assistance of the artist, and when he is no longer present." And again he says, "the theory represents God as an artist, who leaves his work when he has completed it, or idly beholds its operations." In this respect the theory resembles the abstruse dogma which prevails among some of the pagan nations of the East, and which teaches that God, after he made the world, resigned the care of it to subordinate powers, and retired himself into a state of inactivity, and became absolutely quiescent. Calvin in his Insti-

Digitized by Google

tutes notices and discards the theory. Dr. Price particularly undertakes to confute it in his Dissertations, and says, it would lead to a blind and frightful *fatalism*. Dr. Dick also touches upon it in his theology. And it is clearly and strikingly exhibited by Cowper in his Task, in the following lines:

"Some say that in the origin of things,
When all creation started into birth,
The infant elements received a law,
From which they swerve not since;—that under force
Of that controlling ordinance they move,
And need not his immediate hand, who first
Prescribed their course, to regulate it now.
Thus dream they, and contrive to save a God
Th' incumbrance of his own concerns, and spare
The great artificer of all that moves,
The stress of a continual act, the pain
Of unremitted vigilance and care,
As too laborious and severe a task.
So man, the moth, is not afraid, it seems,
To spare omnipotence, and measure might
That knows no measure, by the scanty rule
And standard of his own."

The theory under consideration, stated more specifically and fully, is this; that God at first imparted certain powers to the material and spiritual creation, and established certain permanent laws according to which those powers should operate, and that, as he originally established this perfect order, this system of powers and laws, and set things in operation upon this plan, there is no need of his continued and present agency; that the created system, thus contrived and established, will go on of itself without being constantly propelled, as they express it, by the hand of the Creator; that the powers or active principles with which he has invested the system of things, and to which he has given perpetuity, continue to operate and produce their proper effects, without any further act of divine power. According to this hypothesis, the doctrine of divine providence is, that God at the beginning produced and established a system which from its own inherent energies and according to laws once for all impressed upon it, is to move round and move on, and bring out all the phenomena

Digitized by Google

and accomplish all the ends designed; and that the system is made so perfect, that it can be safely trusted, and will certainly go right, without any additional assistance or care of its divine Author; and that, in reality, all he has now to do, is to look on with infinite complacency, and see how wise and good the system is, and how perfectly it works, *without his present agency or care.*

I have thus endeavored to state the theory, as fairly and exactly as possible, and to present before you its most plausible aspects. The question before us is, not whether God has given powers and laws to the creation; for, in this, all are agreed; but whether, in the affairs of providence, God has *a present agency;* or whether the events which take place result entirely from the powers and laws of nature, *independently of any present agency of God;* — whether the effects, now produced, result from the present operation of the divine power, as their real and ultimate cause; or whether they result entirely from the active principles and powers which God at first imparted to the creation, called second causes, without any present exercise of his power.

You will carefully notice the reason, why the advocates of this scheme deny any present agency of God in the affairs of providence, namely, that he did at first impart the necessary powers to the various parts of creation, and impress laws upon them to regulate their motions, and at the outset appointed that these laws and powers should have a permanent efficacy, and that in consequence of this, all the ends of providence are answered by the unfailing efficacy of these laws and powers of nature, *without any farther agency on the part of God.* This is the ground on which the advocates of the scheme deny, that the events of providence depend on any present agency of God. Keeping this in mind, you will understand what the length and breadth of the scheme is, taken as a consistent whole. For it is manifest that this very reason on which the scheme rests, exists in regard to one part of the creation as well as another — in regard to all parts, as much as to any. For God at first did certainly impart the proper powers both to the material world and the spiritual world, and did

Digitized by Google

establish regular laws respecting them. There can be no doubt that these powers and laws belong to human and angelic minds, as really as to material substances. In all minds and all bodies, these powers and laws are equally real, permanent and efficacious. It is evident then what the scheme really is, if consistently and fully carried out, namely; that the creation universally goes on and accomplishes all the ends designed, by the force of its own inherent powers, and in accordance with its own appropriate and permanent laws, *without any present agency of God.* For the same reason which would prove that a present divine agency in the highest sense is unnecessary, would prove that a present divine agency is unnecessary in any sense. In other words, the same reason which would prove that the creation is not immediately and entirely dependent on the present will and agency of God, would prove that it is not dependent at all. The creation, it is said, is furnished with the requisite powers and laws of action. So be it. And is it not *completely* furnished — is it not furnished with all the requisite powers and laws, and all in the requisite degree? And if so, then, according to this scheme, the creation in all its parts is qualified to go on of itself, without any help from above. If it needs help in any way or in any degree, how can it be said to be completely and permanently furnished with all the requisite powers and laws of action. No doubt the creation is, in the proper sense, completely furnished. And if its being thus furnished is any reason why a present divine agency is not necessary, it is a full reason. If it supersedes the necessity of a present divine agency in one part of the creation, it does in all parts. If it supersedes the necessity of it in its higher degrees, it supersedes it in every degree. Take the case which is so often chosen to illustrate the scheme we are considering. A skilful artist makes a clock, which will of itself go exactly a week or a month. It is a perfect piece of mechanism, and during the week or the month, needs no help from the maker or owner. There is no occasion that he should touch it, or look at it, or think of it. It goes thus far completely of itself, i. e. by the operation of its own inherent powers, without any assist-

Digitized by Google

ance or any attention of the maker. It may be said, the clock, however skilfully constructed, does still, at stated times, need winding up, and must occasionally be repaired. True, and what does this prove? It proves an imperfection in the time-piece — an imperfection which cannot be avoided by human skill, because human skill cannot get at the principle of perpetual motion, and cannot prevent the wasting effect of friction. But can it be supposed that any imperfection of this kind appertains to the operations of God? Can those who maintain the scheme under consideration, mean only, that the powers and laws of nature are such as to keep up orderly motion in the creation only for a time, say for a year or a century, and that this great machine then needs to be wound up or repaired by its Author, and that without this occasional attention, it would exhaust its energies and stop? To any who should hold such a notion as this, I would propose two questions. The first is, why has God left the system of his works so imperfect — so imperfect according to their own views? Why has he not imparted powers and laws to the creation, which will carry it on and accomplish all his purposes perpetually, without any intervention of his own agency? This certainly would, on their scheme, be a far greater perfection, than to leave the matter so as to require any such occasional attention and agency from God. Why then has he left things in so imperfect a state? Could not he impart powers and laws which would secure perpetual motion and perpetual order to all parts of the creation? Is the establishment of perpetual motion beyond the power of the all-wise and Almighty God, as it is beyond the power of ignorant, feeble man? If he can give the power to act independently of his continued agency for a time, why not forever? My second question is, whether in the regular course of things in the material or spiritual world, there is any evidence of such a *periodical* or *occasional* divine agency. I mean, whether there is any more evidence of an occasional divine agency, than there is of a continual divine agency. Look at the motion and order of the heavenly bodies. Look at all the regular processes of nature in our world. Can you perceive any appearances indicating that the machine of the creation is in dan-

Digitized by Google

ger of running down, that the power which gives it motion is in danger of being spent, and needs to be relieved or recruited by foreign help? Some distinguished philosophers have supposed something like this. But is there any reason for such a supposition? In the settled course of things among the heavenly bodies, or on the earth, is there any more evidence of an *occasional* divine agency, than there is of a *constant* divine agency? According to the scheme we are examining, we cannot consistently suppose any actual divine superintendence over the creation. For if the settled powers and laws of nature are such, as to render any present divine agency unnecessary, where is the necessity of any divine *superintendence?* Cannot the powers and laws of nature, to which so much is ascribed, operate a single day or moment, without the actual oversight and care of the Creator? Do those who maintain this scheme think that the great machine is after all so imperfectly made, that it needs looking to, every moment to keep it in order? And then on their scheme, what does God actually do in the exercise of this superintendence? Does he do anything? Does he put forth any agency? If he does, then their scheme falls at once. If he does, then the powers and laws of nature are not such as to supersede his present agency. And this is the same as to say, that a present divine agency is consistent with the operation of the powers and laws of nature, and not only consistent with it, but necessary to it. And then I say, as before, if any present divine agency is consistent and necessary, so is a complete divine agency.

Possibly some may think that the divine superintendence only implies, that God constantly keeps his eye upon the creation, and puts forth his hand to guide and regulate it, whenever he sees it to be necessary. But then, according to the scheme we are examining, how can such a necessity be supposed ever to occur, without implying an imperfection in God's workmanship? For if his imparting such laws and powers to the creation as he has imparted, is sufficient to enable it to go on of itself, without a constant exercise of divine power; then if anything occurs to make a particular act of divine power, at any time necessary, it

Digitized by Google

would show, according to this way of thinking, that after all he had not imparted the requisite powers and laws, and so that his work was left imperfect.

It may be allowed by some who lean toward this scheme, that God constantly *upholds* the powers and laws of nature which he has appointed, this being all which is necessary. This view of the subject may perhaps be right. But I should feel it important to inquire, what it is to uphold these powers and laws? The idea seems to be this; that when God created the material and spiritual world, he invested it with all such powers as would be sufficient to carry it on and accomplish his purpose, and impressed laws upon it to regulate the operation of its powers, and that what God now does is to sustain these powers and laws, i. e. to preserve them and continue their efficacy. Now this agency of God in upholding these powers and laws and continuing to them the requisite efficacy, is by the very supposition a constant agency, an agency of God, on which these powers and laws continually depend. Thus understood, the scheme would come to be substantially the same as the one commonly adopted. This is the principle which is defended by Dr. Price, namely, that the cause from which the general laws that govern the world are derived, is the immediate power of Deity exerted everywhere. But it is evident that this view cannot be taken consistently with the supposition, that the powers and laws of nature are sufficient of themselves, and so supersede the present and constant agency of God. For here it is maintained, that there is a constant divine agency *in those very powers and laws of nature.* And this seems to be the same truth philosophically expressed, as is so clearly taught in the current language of the Bible. But the scheme which I wish to examine, and against which there are, in my view, unanswerable objections, is not only that the creation is invested with all the requisite powers and put under the requisite laws; but that these powers and laws are so established by the Creator, that they go on of themselves, and execute all his designs, without his present or continued agency; and that the supposition of any immediate or constant acting of his power in order to account for

Digitized by Google

the events of providence or in order to accomplish his purposes, is altogether unphilosophical, and would imply imperfection in those powers and laws of nature which God ordained for the government of the world. Against this hypothesis, I urge three arguments.

My first argument is a direct appeal to the hearts of intelligent Christians. Moral feeling, when rectified by divine grace, harmonizes with the truth. And it not only harmonizes with the truth when discovered, but is an important help in the discovery. A sanctified mind has an eye to see the truth, and to see the difference between truth and error. In most questions relating to the character and agency of God, it is safer to rely upon the unbiased dictate of an honest and pious heart, than upon the operation of a speculative intellect, however powerful it may be. I appeal then directly to you. What is your feeling in regard to the subject before us? What would you choose in regard to the affairs of divine providence? You have doubtless been accustomed to think, that the God you worship is always and everywhere present, and is always exercising his wisdom, power and goodness. You have considered God as putting forth an agency unceasingly in all parts of the creation. You have considered him as on your right hand and on your left; as always taking care of you, sustaining your life, giving you food and raiment and every blessing, and by his Spirit sanctifying and comforting you. Now how would it agree with your pious feelings to be told, that God has really done nothing since the creation; that he then formed the world of matter and the world of mind, and gave it the requisite powers and laws, and that these powers act of themselves, that these laws execute themselves, and that the great system of things thus goes on *without any present agency of God;* that all the wisdom, power and goodness, which he has ever exercised, were exercised at once when he made the world, and that since that time he has retired to a state of inaction, having nothing to do, unless indeed he is engaged in creating other systems, and in investing them with powers and laws to take care of themselves, leaving them also as soon as they are created, to go

Digitized by Google

on without any farther concern of his. I ask how all this would agree with your feelings? How would you like to be under the government of a God who has nothing at present to do and will have nothing hereafter to do with the world which he has made? How would you like to be in such a forsaken, solitary world, under the influence of the powers and laws of nature, which are not God, but which according to this scheme, stand in the place of God? Which would you prefer, — to be under the government of a being who is infinitely intelligent and powerful and good, and who shows himself to be so by his continual agency, or to be under the government of the powers and laws of nature, which have neither intelligence, nor design, nor feeling? Or to take another view, which would you prefer, — to be under the government of a God whose very nature is to be active, and who by his constant agency in all places and in all things, or in the words of the Apostle, by working all in all, exhibits himself continually before you as a wise, powerful, benevolent and glorious God; — or to be under the government of a God whose own agency in the affairs of the world ended with the act of creation, and who committed the whole direction of things to the world itself, after enduing it with the proper powers and laws? — a God to whom it is a matter of choice to do by one great effort all that he has to do, and then to avoid the trouble of constant action, — "to save himself the pain of unremitted diligence and care," or for some other reason, to go into a quiescent state? When you are in trouble, and when you feel yourself to be depraved and guilty, and in need of pardon and sanctification; when you are sick, and when you come to the hour of dying, — which would you prefer — the God of Christians, or the God of Epicurus and the Hindoos?

To this appeal, if I mistake not, your hearts have given a ready response. If the subject is to be disposed of in this manner, you say all is plain. You start back from the idea of a God, who after putting forth one act of power at the creation, forever ceased to act, entrusting the world to the sole direction and care of the laws of nature. It would make the world a solitary place, and you would go mourning all your days after an absent God,

Digitized by Google

and your souls could never be satisfied with that system of unintelligent powers and laws, which is thrust upon you in the place of the constant presence, the constant care, and the holy and merciful agency of your heavenly Father. You say, give me that doctrine which brings my God near.

On this point, I have only one more remark. If that doctrine of divine providence, which has commonly been received and acted upon by devout Christians, and defended by so many learned divines, is most consonant to the feelings of every good man, and which every good man would wish to be true; then how strange must it appear, that any man should go about by hard philosophizing and profound sophistry, to invent another scheme of providence, which would be infinitely less pleasing and comforting to the pious heart; and, in order to maintain a scheme so unwelcome, so abstruse, and so chilling to the souls of Christians, that he should labor to put the most unnatural and forced sense upon the word of God, which from beginning to end, most plainly teaches the common doctrine of providence. This I expect soon to show. How sincerely is it to be deplored, that any man on earth should oppose and decry this most delightful, most precious doctrine of divine providence, and attempt to thrust in another as cold as Greenland; and then to labor to support it —how? Why, by doing violence to the unadulterated sentiments of Christian piety, and I may say of heathen piety too, and by trying to compel the Bible to utter or to countenance a sentiment, which stands in opposition to the whole current of its teachings. Let an undertaking like this fall into the hands of those who, not liking to retain God in their knowledge are doing all that the most creative imagination and the most subtle and imposing sophistry can do, to banish God from the creation, or else to make the creation God. But, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united!"

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLIV.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE. CONSIDERATION OF THE PARTICULAR THEORY CONTINUED.

In the second place, I appeal to *the word of God*. Here the great difficulty is to make the most suitable selection from a great multitude of texts found in different parts of the Bible. Some of the more general representations are these: "The Lord reigneth;" — reigneth *now*. "His kingdom ruleth over all." It is a present and universal dominion. "Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." Here David has his eye upon what God had done in his own case, and is led by this to notice what he does in all other cases. The Apostle said to the people at Lystra, that although God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, he nevertheless "left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons." And in reference to the same subject, Christ says, that our "Father in heaven causeth his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." It is the evidence which God now gives of his diffusive and ever active goodness. Scripture also teaches that God causes the grass to grow, clothes the lilies, hears the cry of the young lions, feeds the ravens, takes care of the sparrows, and numbers the hairs of our head; that he gives us life and health and all things. It teaches also that God exercises a universal agency over the minds of men, and over the concerns of the moral world; that the heart is in his hand, and

Digitized by Google

that he turneth it whithersoever he will; that he directeth our steps, and often contrary to our own devising; that he sanctifieth whom he will, and that he worketh all in all. These are only a small part of the general representations made in the Scriptures of the agency of God, both in the natural and moral world. The language is perfectly plain, and shows beyond doubt, what was in the minds of the inspired writers. There are in fact no forms of speech, by which they could more unequivocally teach the common doctrine of divine providence, the doctrine that God has a present concern and a present agency and control in all the affairs of the creation.

The history of the world, as recorded in the Scriptures, teaches the same doctrine. When you look into the Bible, you find first that God created the heavens and the earth. The work of creation was *accomplished by God himself*. And when you proceed with this inspired book, you find that the events of providence are in the same manner expressly ascribed to *the same divine agency*. God gave commands to our first parents. And when they sinned, he made known his displeasure and doomed them to suffering. He raised up one generation of men after another, and bestowed favors or inflicted punishments. When the people built Babel, the Lord scattered them abroad. The Lord called Abraham and gave him a numerous posterity. He sent Joseph into Egypt, and there gave him power. He brought Jacob and his family into Egypt, and multiplied them and made them a great people. When they were oppressed, the Lord delivered them, gave them the land of Canaan, and drove out the inhabitants before them, and there made them a mighty nation. And afterwards it was God who visited them with desolating judgments for their idolatry and wickedness. It was God who sent them into captivity. It was God who raised up Cyrus, and put it into his heart to favor their return, and to promote the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It was God who sent his Son into the world, who laid the burden of our iniquities upon him; who raised him from the dead and highly exalted him. It was God who spread the gospel, and called Jews and Gentiles out of darkness into marvellous light.

Digitized by Google

The Scriptures teach, that God has a real, present agency in the affairs of individuals, in their birth, their character, their actions, their life, their health, their sickness, and the time and circumstances of their death.

The sacred writers, who were men of good sense and honesty, and who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, have taught the doctrine of *the present agency* of God in the affairs of the world, as plainly as human language can teach it. On supposition that they actually believed this doctrine, and made it their object to declare it unequivocally, how could they have done more than they have done?

Unitarians and others who mean to show a respect for the Bible, and yet wish to be rid of the idea of a constant divine providence and agency, say, that to attribute events constantly to the hand of God as the sacred writers do, is the Hebrew or Oriental idiom. I know very well it is the Hebrew idiom. And I know too it is the idiom chosen by prophets and apostles, by Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, — the idiom in which God has seen fit to speak to us, not to deceive us, but to instruct us. In this divine idiom God teaches divine truth, and teaches it in such a manner, as to make it intelligible to every man who reads with a candid and pious disposition. And if there is no such thing as an actual, present agency of God in the actions of men and the affairs of the world, the language of the Scriptures is adapted to mislead. It has actually misled Christians of the highest attainments in knowledge and holiness. It is a general fact, that when good men exercise the spirit of piety, and live near to God, they understand the Scriptures in relation to this subject in their plain, obvious sense, and accordingly ascribe to God a present and constant agency in all the concerns of the world. This view of God's providence is dear to them, and they hold it fast, finding that whatever events take place, it quiets their minds and gives them peace. It is a powerful motive to watchfulness, to diligence in doing good, and to fortitude in suffering. But if the doctrine is not true, we are met with the unaccountable fact, that the most intelligent, devout and spiritual Christians, to

Digitized by Google

whom God has promised the special teachings of his spirit, are the most likely to misunderstand the Scriptures, and to form erroneous ideas of the providence of God. Yes, the most intelligent, devout and spiritual Christians, who really enjoy the teachings of the divine Spirit, are the furthest from the truth and the most in love with error. For they certainly believe that God has a present and most benevolent agency in their life and health, in their daily bread, and in all their concerns. They believe and acknowledge this, and act upon it. And it diffuses joy through their whole life, and sheds a cheering light upon them, when they pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Now if this doctrine is an error, — then I say it is an error which is inseparable from eminent piety. It is an error which naturally and necessarily goes in company with truth, and has all the influence of truth, and which those will be the least likely to give up, who derive their opinions most scrupulously and reverently from the fountain of truth, — the word of God.

Under the head of Scripture evidence, I have one thing more to suggest. All who believe in miracles, consider them as the effects of the direct and present agency of God. But if you examine the Scriptures, you will find that miraculous events and common events are equally ascribed to God. The manner in which they are spoken of by the inspired writers is the same. The deluge has generally been regarded as a miracle. And how is it described? It is said, "God caused it to rain forty days and forty nights." Common rain is not a miracle. And how do the inspired writers speak of this? They say that God prepareth rain for the earth, that he causeth the rain to descend. Thus common rain and miraculous rain are both ascribed to God. They are different in other and very important respects, but in this they are alike, that they both result from *the present agency of God.* So with respect to the cure of sickness. Whether the cure is in the common way, or in a miraculous way, it is ascribed to God, and is ascribed in language equally unambiguous and strong. It is God, who healeth all our diseases. Common and miraculous cures are effected by the same divine agency. The

Digitized by Google

dividing of the Red Sea was a miracle, and the sacred writers say, God divided the waters, that the children of Israel might go over on dry ground. But they say with equal plainness and force, that God commandeth the winds and they arise, and that he ruleth the waves of the sea. The same is true as to the endowments and actions of men. Those which are common and those which are miraculous are represented as flowing equally from the present agency and direction of God. If the Bible teaches that God gives miraculous endowments to prophets and apostles, and enables them to perform miraculous works, it also teaches, that he imparts to men their common endowments, and directs their common actions. That God has a present agency in miraculous events we learn from the express declarations of his word. But the same word expressly teaches us that he has a present agency in common events. If we deny one, we must deny the other. I only add, if we deny God's present agency in common actions, to be consistent we must deny his agency in holy actions. As to the reality of the divine agency, the Scriptures maintain it equally in respect to the common affections and acts of the mind and in respect to those which are holy. As to the reality of a divine agency, there is no difference. But in other respects there is a difference, a difference of great moment. And there is evidently good reason to mark this difference in the usual way, that is with reference to the common affections and acts of men, to speak of God's *common* agency, and with reference to the sanctification of the heart, to speak of God's *special* and *supernatural* agency; and again with reference to miracles, to speak of God's *miraculous* agency. In all these cases there is a real, present, divine agency. But the circumstances, the mode and the results of the divine agency in these three cases are different. The reality we learn from Scripture. The difference we learn from obvious facts and circumstances.

Having thus exhibited the direct Scripture argument in support of the doctrine of a real and present agency of God in his providence, I shall now, in the *third* place argue the point from the important duty of prayer.

Digitized by Google

What then is it to pray? It is to ask God to do some act of kindness, to bestow some favor. "Give us this day our daily bread." We ask God to do this act of kindness *to-day*. In this prayer, it is implied that we need and desire food; that for this blessing we depend upon God, and that we look upon him as able and willing to do this kindness, and to do it to-day. And it is implied that if we have our daily bread, it is given us by God, really given, though by an invisible hand; and that at the close of the day it is proper for us to acknowledge the favor he has conferred upon us during the day.

Now this is one of the common bounties of divine providence. There is no miracle in it. It comes according to the laws of nature. In this case, God exercises his goodness at the present time, or he does not. If he does — if he performs an act of kindness towards us at the present time — if he wills to supply our wants, and actually does what he wills, then prayer has a meaning, and they who pray have a meaning, and they mean what they say. God *gives* them their daily bread. And then their gratitude has a meaning, and is conformed to truth. And on this principle, it is suitable for them to continue every day to offer up the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." In this they act as properly, as a child who asks his father or his mother to give him bread. And if the Scriptures are true, he who asks a favor of God, has at least as much reason to expect that God will actually do what he prays for, as any child has reason to expect the favor he asks of a kind parent. This difference however is manifest, that the parent bestows the favor by a hand that is seen, and God, by a hand that is not seen.

But if the contrary supposition is true, that is, if God does not actually exercise his power and goodness to-day in giving us our daily bread — if his agency began and ended six thousand years ago in creating the world, and establishing the laws of nature, and no new act of his power is to be expected at the present time; then what is the meaning of prayer?

The similitude of the clock is so apt, that we shall recur to it

Digitized by Google

again. A well made clock goes for a time without any present care of any one. Of course there would be no propriety in going continually to the clock maker, and asking him to keep his eye upon his clock and constantly to watch it and take care of it from morning to night, and from night to morning. There would be no propriety of our asking this of him; for the clock will go just as well if he is absent or asleep or dead, as if he is alive and awake and present. Now I say if we are no otherwise dependent, and no more dependent on God, than a clock is on the man who made it; we have no more occasion to ask that the eye of God may be upon us for good, and that he would take care of us day and night, than we have to ask a clock maker to attend continually to the finished time-piece he has made, to stand by it every moment, and to take care to keep it in regular motion. When we pray, we ask God to do something, and to do it at the present time, or at some future time. But if the scheme before us is true, we know that God will not do what we ask; that he has no present agency in the affairs of the creation; that the great machine is so constituted, as to go on without him. Accordingly if we pray at all, we should pray to that which can put forth the necessary agency, we should pray to that which is really to accomplish the good we desire. That is, we should pray to the great machine of the world. We should pray to the laws of nature, — the kind, the omniscient, the efficacious laws of nature! — But in truth, these laws of nature have no understanding, and they cannot know what we need. They have no heart, and they cannot feel for us, and their ear is heavy that they cannot hear.

Or, if the fact is really as the scheme under consideration supposes, and yet we do not know it, and if under this mistake, we offer up prayer to God, and ask him to do us an act of kindness to day; then I say our prayer is an illusion. The thoughts of our minds when we pray, are mistaken thoughts, and the mistake is the ground of our prayer. God knows that we are mistaken in thinking that he will now actually exert his power in the way desired. And those who have got into this profound philosophy,

Digitized by Google

know that we are mistaken, and that our prayer does not correspond with nature and truth. And they labor to instruct us, so that we may no longer imagine such a thing as that God does at present really act in the concerns of the world. And if they succeed in convincing us of this, then we will leave off the practice of asking God to give us this day our daily bread, or to do anything which implies his present agency, being convinced that there is no such agency.

The Apostle Paul was desirous of visiting the Christians at Thessalonica, and in his first Epistle to them he said; "Now God even our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you." What was in the Apostle's mind when he offered up this devout desire? He certainly thought it proper to ask God to direct his way to the Thessalonians. And he certainly thought that God would actually direct his way to them, if he saw fit to answer his prayer. But for God to direct his way to the Thessalonians was to *do* something, it was *an act* of God — an act to be performed at that time. And if it was not according to truth to suppose that God would have such an agency at that time, then the apprehension of the Apostle's mind, which was the foundation of his prayer, was a mistake, and if he had been free from the mistake, he would not have prayed as he did.

I put the case to you. When you offer up your evening prayer, you ask God to preserve you through the night, to give you quiet sleep, and to guard you from all evil. When you pray thus, is it not your meaning to ask God to do a real act of kindness? And how would you feel if any one should say to you, — your supposing that God will have any agency in preserving you this night and giving you repose is a mistake; he has committed this to the laws of nature, and the laws of nature are to be relied upon as sufficient for all the purposes of our existence both by day and by night, without any further agency or concern on God's part. He did all that was necessary for him to do when he established the laws of nature. What would you say to such a declaration?

Digitized by Google

And if you believed it, could you pray? Or if you should pray, to what would you pray?

These remarks apply equally to the divine agency in regard to the mind. The prayers which prophets and apostles offered to God, that he would enlighten their understanding, subdue their sins, sanctify their hearts, strengthen them for duty, and give them the comforts of his Spirit, clearly imply a desire and expectation that God would do what they requested — that he would actually *do* it — and do it at the time when it was needed. And when we pray for the same spiritual blessings, we do certainly think, that we are asking God to do something. And this is the same as saying, we believe God has a present agency in enlightening, sanctifying and comforting his people. But there is the same reason to deny God's agency in the minds of men, as to deny his agency in the natural world. For surely God has invested the mind with suitable powers, and has given it suitable laws. And these powers are as operative, and these laws as uniform, as the powers and laws of the material creation. And as the mind is incorruptible, and has an inherent activity far above any activity found in the natural world, we should suppose that if a divine agency could be dispensed with anywhere, it would be here. The machinery of the intellectual and spiritual world is manifestly more excellent in its structure, and makes a higher display of the perfection of its Author, than the machinery of the natural world. No one therefore can reasonably think, that the laws of the natural world are such, and were originally designed to be such, as to supersede the constant agency of God, without thinking also, that the laws of the mind are such, and were designed to be such, as to supersede his agency in the mind. The scheme we are considering, to be consistent, must relate equally to matter and mind, and for the same reason. I say then that this scheme, if true, would make all prayer for a divine influence in our souls a mistake. For when we pray for such an influence, we do certainly apprehend that there is such a thing; we apprehend that God does really give his Spirit, and

Digitized by Google

give it at the present day to enlighten, sanctify and comfort the souls of his children. If this influence of the Spirit, which we regard as so precious, and so necessary that we shall perish without it — if such an influence does not exist, and if all real, actual agency on God's part was put forth at the creation in imparting powers and laws to the spiritual world — then all prayer for a *present* divine influence is founded in delusion; and if David and the other prophets and the apostles had understood the matter right, the prayers they offered up for God's influence in their hearts would have been suppressed. If they had only had the true philosophy, they would not have prayed! As to ourselves — we are accustomed to pray that God himself would work in us both to will and to do, that he would guide us into the truth, and make us holy. And we have verily thought, and it has been a part of our faith, that God does exert such a desirable influence in the soul, and that we may humbly hope to obtain it by fervent prayer; and feeling our great need of it, we have applied ourselves to God day by day with the request, that he would vouchsafe to us the precious gift of his Spirit — a Spirit divinely powerful to illuminate and purify and comfort the soul, and to do it when we need it, at the *present time*. But if the scheme we have been considering is true, the laws of mind are such, that no present agency of God in the mind is to be expected; and if all his agency was put forth at the beginning, when he gave laws to the spiritual world; and if we are brought to believe all this, then our prayers are ended forever. We shall no longer ask an act of kindness from God, when we believe he does no such act. We shall no longer ask him to work in us to will and to do, when we are convinced there is no such work of God in the soul. How much soever we may feel our need of such influence from God, we shall feel that we cannot consistently ask it because God cannot consistently give it. And thus though poor and needy, and sinful and weak and desolate, and conscious of our utter insufficiency for our own sanctification and happiness,

Digitized by Google

we shall be cut off from the privilege of coming to the throne of grace, which has been our last and only hope, and shall be forced to cast ourselves upon the powers of our own mind and to seek relief where only it can be found, that is, from *the laws of nature*. And thus we shall be of all men the most miserable.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLV.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE. THE EXCEPTIONABLE THEORY FURTHER CONSIDERED. REMARKS AS TO THE LAWS AND POWERS OF NATURE AND THEIR DEPENDENCE ON GOD. TWO PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

I SHOULD not think it expedient to extend this discussion so far, were it not that the scheme under consideration is very subtle and very plausible, and when it once gets possession of the mind, is hard to be dislodged. It has an element of truth which recommends it to speculative reason. In one point of view, it is all that reason demands. But in another view, or by looking at it on the other side, its falsity is easily discovered. The scheme is of such a nature, that it cannot be well understood without being subjected to a thorough scrutiny. While seen at a distance under the garb which it assumes, it may appear like an angel of light. But when brought near and embraced, it is a malignant demon. The plain fact is, that although it may admit the idea of God, as the Creator or the original cause of all things, it does not admit the idea of God as the Preserver and Governor. It excludes him in that sense, in which we are most of all concerned with him. As related to the duty and privilege of prayer, and to all the interests of practical religion, it is Atheism. It puts nature in the place of God. And if we adopt the scheme, our relation to God must be transferred to nature; and a speculative contemplation of nature must come in the place of our devout intercourse with a present God. And as the cordial belief of a present, ever active, and benevolent God is the life of religion,

Digitized by Google

religion is dead as soon as that belief is abandoned. The worship of nature, whether in one form or another, was the idolatry which revelation was intended to abolish. The scheme under review would set aside revelation, and the spiritual worship of Jehovah which revelation aimed to establish, and would carry us back to the idol worship of our pagan ancestors. And if our minds should not be narrow enough to exercise a religious reverence towards particular parts of nature, it would lead us to seek satisfaction by looking at nature as a whole, invested with its various powers and laws. And I leave it to those who embrace the scheme to answer the question, whether the circumstance above mentioned is not in reality what makes it so welcome to their feelings, relieving them from the duty of prayer, and from all the terrors which the unsubdued, unsanctified heart would feel in being under the actual and constant government of a righteous and Almighty God; whether that in the scheme which is most appalling to Christians, is not most attractive to them.

And here it would afford me special gratification to know, what answers the strenuous advocates of the scheme under review would be able to give to such questions as the following.

1. Did they derive the scheme from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament? And do they really believe that the views which the sacred writers entertained and meant to express on the subject of divine providence correspond with their scheme? My question is, whether they rest the scheme on Christian principles, or on the principles of a skeptical or pantheistic philosophy.

2. How do they *know* that all events result from the laws of nature *without any present divine agency?* They may indeed know the order of events, and the laws according to which they take place. But how do they know that the wisdom, power and benevolence, manifested in that order, reside in nature itself, and not in the Author of nature? The agency of God in preserving and governing the world is an invisible agency. But how can they infer from its being invisible, that it does not exist? Admit the visible phenomena of nature to be the same on both schemes; what reason have they to think, that the present, supreme, efficient

Digitized by Google

cause of those phenomena lies in nature, and not in nature's God? If they say that when one cause is sufficient, it is unphilosophical to look for another; I ask how they come to know that the one sufficient cause is in nature? It must be a cause of astonishing power and skill that can sustain and move all the heavenly bodies, and bring to pass all the events that take place in this and other worlds. How do they satisfy themselves that a cause possessed of such unbounded power and skill exists anywhere but in the Being of beings, the eternal God?

3. Do the advocates of the scheme under consideration see anything in the operations which are going on, or in the events which are taking place in the physical or moral world, which would render it inconsistent with the perfections of God, that his agency should be concerned in them — anything which would make it unworthy of God that he should continually act in upholding, directing and governing such a world? If there is, then let them show how it is consistent that God should at first establish laws which would invariably produce these events? Let them show that it is more worthy of God to make such arrangements and establish such principles, as would certainly cause all the operations which have appeared in the creation, than to exert his present agency in sustaining and governing the world, and causing the same operations? If they think what we call the plan of providence or the order of events cannot be consistently ascribed to the *present* agency of God; how can it be consistently ascribed to his *past* agency?

4. Can my opponents show any advantage which their scheme has over the common scheme? Do they think it has the advantage of ascribing the phenomena of nature to a cause which is any more visible or manifest than the divine cause? But is the energy of God any more invisible than second causes or the inherent powers and energies of nature?

Can they plead that their scheme makes the order of events more firm and stable, and more to be relied upon? But what can be more firm and stable and more to be relied upon, than the constant care and agency of the unchangeable God? — the

Digitized by Google

constant exercise of infinite and unchangeable wisdom, power and benevolence?

Can they plead that nature with its powers and laws is near, and that their scheme brings them into a closer connection with the grand efficient, governing cause of all that takes place? But what can be nearer than the omnipresent Spirit? With what can we have a more close and intimate connection, than with that God, in whom we live and move and have our being?

Do they allege that their scheme secures the mind against those agitations and forebodings which arise from the constant apprehension of such a Being as God is described to be — a God of awful holiness and justice, requiring so strict a service and forbidding transgression on so dreadful a penalty? But what can be more composing to those who are penitent and contrite, than the Scriptural representation of a God whose mercy is higher than the heavens; whose grace abounds where sin hath abounded; who has assured all who repent, how great soever the amount of their guilt, that they shall have eternal life? And if the minds of any are agitated with forebodings of divine wrath without any hope of mercy, must it not be owing to their hard, impenitent, unbelieving hearts? And in fact, is the Scripture account of God's justice in the treatment of transgressors more terrific, than is necessary to support the honor of the divine laws, to prevent future offences, or to remedy the evils of those which are past?

Will any advocates of the scheme before us pretend that it would be burdensome to the Supreme Being to be forever exerting himself in upholding and governing all his creatures and all their actions, and that it would be more reasonable to think that after the mighty effort of his power in bringing the universe into being, he would choose not only to rest from the work of creation, but from all further exertion of his power? If so, I would only ask them, whether they have well considered what a Being God is, and whether they have any reason to doubt that the constant exercise of power implied in the common doctrine of providence must be perfectly easy and infinitely pleasing to such a Being, as the Scriptures represent God to be?

Digitized by Google

I would ask them finally whether they are not aware, that it is and always has been the sentiment of the devout heart that God puts forth a present agency in all the events which take place both in the natural and in the moral world?

The most plausible illustration of the scheme under consideration has, as I have before suggested, been taken from the mechanism of a clock. A clock skilfully made will for a time go of itself, without any further attention from the maker. And such a time-piece is more honorable to the skill of the man who contrived it, than if it should be necessary for him to stand by and move it continually with his own hand. In like manner, it is said, God is more honored by framing the world in such a manner, that it will go on of itself and accomplish all the ends designed, without any further attention from him, than by leaving it in such a state as to need his constant agency to sustain it, and to direct all its affairs.

This matter is well explained by Dr. Samuel Clarke in his correspondence with Leibnitz.

"The reason why among men an artificer is justly esteemed so much the more skilful, as the machine of his composing will continue longer to move regularly without any farther interposition of the workman, is because the skill of all human artificers consists only in composing, adjusting or putting together certain movements, the principles of whose motion are altogether independent of the artificer, such as are weights and springs and the like; whose forces are not made but only adjusted by the workman. But with regard to God the case is quite different; because he not only composes or puts things together, but is himself the Author and continual Preserver of their original forces or moving powers; and consequently it is not a diminution but the true glory of his workmanship, that nothing is done without his continual government and inspection. The notion of the world's being a great machine going on without the interposition of God, as a clock continues to go without the assistance of a clock-maker, is the notion of materialism and fate, and, under pretence of making God a supra-mundane intelligence, tends to exclude provi-

Digitized by Google

dence and God's government in reality out of the world. And by the same reason that a philosopher can represent all things going on from the beginning of the creation without any government or interposition of Providence, a skeptic will easily argue still farther backwards, and suppose that things have from eternity gone on, as they now do, without any true creation or original Author at all, but only what such arguers call *all wise and eternal nature.* If a king had a kingdom, wherein all things would continually go on without his government or interposition, or without his attending to and ordering what is done therein; it would be to him merely a nominal kingdom; nor would he in reality deserve at all the title of king or governor. And as those men, who pretend that in an earthly government things may go on perfectly well without the king himself ordering or disposing of anything, may reasonably be suspected that they would like very well to set the king aside; so whosoever contends that the course of the world can go on, without the continual direction of God, the Supreme Governor; his doctrine does in effect tend to exclude God out of the world."

As to the constant dependence of all things on God, Clarke and Leibnitz agree, and Clarke says: "There are no powers of nature at all that can do anything of themselves, (as weights and springs work of themselves with regard to man.) But the wisdom and foresight of God consist in contriving at once, what his power and government is continually putting in actual execution." He holds that "God's conserving all things means his actual operation and government in preserving and continuing the being, powers, dispositions, and motions of all things." "But," he says, "if his conserving all things means no more than a king's creating such subjects, as shall be able to act well enough without his intermedling or ordering anything among them ever after; this is making him indeed a real creator, but only a nominal governor." And he quotes Sir Isaac Newton, who holds the same principles, and says; "A God without dominion, without providence and final causes, is nothing but fate and nature."

Leibnitz says "To infer from that passage of holy Scripture,

Digitized by Google

wherein God is said to have rested from his works, that there is no longer a continual production of them, would be to make a very ill use of that text;" though he says "there is no production of new simple substances."

Here let me call your attention to two particular remarks, which I hope will clear away any remaining obscurities, and show that the common doctrine of Divine Providence is open to no valid objections.

First. The doctrine of Divine Providence, as commonly held, not only admits, but includes what are called *the powers and laws of nature.* The scheme I have opposed is not objected to because it holds to these. But the fact that it does hold to them, is the circumstance which gives it an aspect of truth, and which is made so plausible an argument in its favor. Now let it be remembered that we do not object to that scheme because it contains this truth, but because it rejects another truth and one of the highest moment. In other words, the scheme is not faulty because it holds to general laws and powers of nature, but because it disconnects them from the constant agency of God, thus giving them a present independence. To do justice to the subject of Divine Providence, I have deemed it important to say expressly, so that it may not fail to be understood and remembered, that the common scheme recognizes and maintains in all their extent what are denominated the laws of nature both in the physical and the moral world.

Scripture speaks and philosophy speaks of things material and spiritual, as endued with various powers, which operate according to fixed principles and laws. These powers and laws are not fictions, but realities. They as really exist as matter or mind. Indeed neither matter nor mind could exist, and be what it is, without them. And the powers which belong to the material and spiritual creation not only are realities, but are possessed of a real activity. All language, and the thoughts of all minds ascribe to spiritual beings and to material things an energy which produces effects. Who can help ascribing a real and a mighty efficiency to the electric power, to heat and to steam, and es-

Digitized by Google

pecially to the powers of the mind? That these powers actually produce various and important effects is a matter of constant experience. It is implied in whatever we say or think or do. And those who hold the doctrine of divine agency in the high sense in which it is set forth in the Scriptures, still ascribe active powers and laws to matter and mind — they do this deliberately and sincerely. And if they should make the attempt to lay aside the language which implies this, and to introduce new modes of speech which would not contain a recognition of the powers and laws of nature, the attempt would evince their folly and absurdity. Common sense and common experience tell the truth. But a man who denies the existence and constant operation of the laws of nature is in a dream or is insane. He adheres to shadows and illusions, instead of truth and reality.

Read the Scriptures, and see how freely the writers, who teach that God himself worketh all in all, speak the language of common sense, referring constantly to the things that are made, just as they are. And they often do this without any apparent reference to a power above the powers of nature. You may ask, how they could properly do this, if they believed that there is a power above them. I answer, they do it on the principle, that all parts of the truth do not lie on the same side of a subject, and are not to be touched upon at one and the same time. That there is body and spirit, and that these are endued with various powers, operating according to fixed laws, is as real a truth, as that there is a God. To say that a God exists, is not to assert all the truth; because other beings exist as really as God. On the other hand, to say that those other beings exist, is not to say all the truth; because those other beings are not God, and no part of God. Again; that God has a universal agency is a truth, but not all the truth. For other beings have an agency. Upon these principles we see it to have been perfectly proper for the sacred writers to speak frequently of the powers and actions of created beings, without expressly referring at the time to any higher power or agency. In doing this they brought into view one plain, obvious truth, and stopped there, because the occasion

Digitized by Google

did not require more. At other times, they spoke of the power or agency of God without any express reference to the power or agency of created beings. In doing this, they brought into view the great, primary truth, and stopped there, because the occasion did not require them at the time to speak of other truths subordinate to this.

Having thus shown that the common theory of Providence fully recognizes the powers and the agency of created things, I proceed to my second remark, which is, that the powers and laws of nature and the agency of created things, though really existent, and though really distinct from the power and agency of God, are not in any respect independent of God.

That things may really exist which are dependent, is involved in the very idea of creation. God was the cause, created things the effects, the effects being as real as the cause. And as things may exist, so all their powers may exist, in a state of dependence. And as the existence of created beings and of all their powers depended at first on the efficacious will of God; so does the continuance of their existence. They can no more continue to exist than they could begin to exist, independently of God. Here we have the doctrine of divine preservation, in which the will and agency of God are as really concerned, as in creating them at first. All things are *through* him, as really as *of* him.

While then the powers and laws of nature and the agency of created beings have a real existence, distinct from the power and agency of God, it is evident that they are in all respects dependent on God; that they exist because God wills their existence, and that they continue to exist, because God preserves them or causes them to continue. So the Apostle teaches. It is God that worketh all in all.

The work of God in creating, preserving and governing *intelligent* beings is evidently the most important of all his works. And though the word of God and the whole course of his providence cast a very clear light on this great work, yet it is in relation to this that the human mind is most liable to misapprehension. We

Digitized by Google

may have no difficulty in acknowledging, that the bodies which compose the solar system, and all things in the vegetable and animal world, are dependent on God; that as he made them, he now upholds them and directs and governs all their operations. But that rational and moral beings are dependent on God, and that he works in them and controls all their actions, is a doctrine at which we are apt to stumble. And yet the sacred writers assert this doctrine very frequently, and with great clearness. And they do it without seeming to apprehend, that any objection or difficulty can be urged against it. And if we should look at the subject in the light of unprejudiced reason, we should conclude, that God's agency must be conspicuous, in proportion to the dignity and importance of the beings that he creates and preserves; that if his power and other perfections are displayed in the world at large, they are displayed especially in the rational and moral part; and we should be the furthest possible from imagining, that creatures who possess a nature of singular excellence, are in any respect independent of him who is the source of all excellence. For surely the greater and more excellent the gift, the more clearly is the giver brought into view. And if he not only bestows the excellent gift once, but continues it, we should gratefully acknowledge his continual goodness. Now it is what we should hardly have expected, that any man should question the agency of God in those things, in which it has its brightest display. It would be comparatively a small offence against reason and truth, to doubt the constant agency of God in sustaining lifeless matter. But rational, moral, accountable beings receive from God far more exalted gifts, and hold a far higher rank. In them the operation of his wisdom, power and goodness appears in its highest glory. And *they* are the beings and the only beings, capable of perceiving this display of the divine perfections. And *they* are the beings, who ought devoutly to acknowledge it, and in view of it, to glorify God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift—and if every good and perfect gift, certainly that which is most excellent and perfect. Now that we, rational, immortal beings, who receive such exalted gifts from God,

Digitized by Google

and in whom he displays an agency proportioned to the importance of our noble faculties, and our intelligent and moral actions — that *we* should ever hesitate and be reluctant to admit this divine agency — that we should ever be afraid of ascribing too much to God, as though ascribing all good to him could be too much, — that *we*, who live and move and have our being in God, should proudly arrogate to ourselves a portion of independence, and should arrogate it even in that, in which our dependence pre-eminently appears, — is not this exceedingly strange?

These are the two remarks I had to make. The powers and laws of nature are realities, and are to be admitted and maintained in all their extent. The powers and laws of nature, though distinct from the power and agency of God, are not in any respect nor in any degree independent of God. He worketh all in all, especially in intelligent, free moral beings. There are two distinct powers, — the power of created things, and the power of God, the Creator and Preserver. There are two agencies, the agency of creatures, and the agency of God. These powers and agencies, though closely related to each other, are in their nature totally distinct. Of course the power and agency of the one can never be ascribed to the other, as properly his. The agency of the one may be very nearly connected with the agency of the other, but it cannot be ascribed to the other as his agency.

We inquire then, what relation these two distinct agencies sustain to each other? Are they concurrent or concomitant agencies? That is, are the agency of God and the agency of the creature joined together as agencies of the same kind, and as having the same relation to a common end; and do they contribute to that end in the same manner? Are they collateral or parallel agencies? All these phrases fail of expressing the particular and chief relation between divine agency and human agency. The power and agency of God and the power and agency of creatures, are not originally and properly co-existent, or concurrent. The power of creatures is a consequence, an effect flowing from the divine power. As Jesus said to Pilate; "Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." The relation then of

Digitized by Google

divine power to the power of created beings is the relation of cause to effect. But according to Dr. Johnson, those things which are concurrent or concomitant are not causative or consequential. This is true as to the agency of God and that of created things. They are not concurrent, concomitant, or parallel agencies. The one is causative, the other consequential. The agency of material things is manifestly related to the divine agency, as an effect to a supreme cause. And if we ascribe an agency of a lower kind to a divine cause, shall we not ascribe to the same divine cause an agency of a more exalted kind, that is, the agency of intelligent beings? Do we honor God by representing all the operations in the natural world as resulting from his sovereign appointment and agency? And shall we not honor him more by representing the higher and more wonderful operations of the mind as resulting from the same divine appointment and agency?

But is this dependence on divine agency consistent with the nature of free moral actions? Why not? We do not perform a single action which is not manifestly the effect of some one thing, or many things, which evidently operate upon us or within us as causes. Now if the operation of inferior and even unintelligent causes is consistent with the nature of moral actions; is not the operation of a divine cause, to say the least, equally consistent? Does not God know better than any inferior cause, how to operate upon the mind which he himself has made, and influence its actions, without violating its faculties or preventing its actions from being free, moral, and accountable? What a groundless conceit! The fact is that God, in the exercise of his agency, not only *lets* us be free, moral agents, but *makes* us so. He not only *leaves* us, as some express it, to exercise the faculties of moral agents without hinderance, but *causes* us thus to exercise them. And as our agency is dependent upon God; so are all its properties and circumstances. Thus in the most perfect sense, our free, moral agency, taken just as it is, has to divine agency the relation of an effect to a cause. The effect here is of a far more excellent kind, than any in the material world, and

Digitized by Google

of course ought to be more devoutly ascribed to a divine cause.

In what I have advanced on this subject, my object has not been to support any human theory. I have aimed at nothing, but to bring out distinctly the very positions contained in the word of God. There are, you know, two classes of texts, one of which asserts the agency of God, the other the agency of creatures. This is the case in regard to the natural world. God causes the motions or actions which take place in material things, and those things really move or act. For example, he causes the planets to move, and they do move — the sun to shine, and it shines. These two agencies are real, but not collateral or concomitant. But the inspired writers teach this specially in regard to *man*. God causes us to walk in his statutes. He inclines our hearts to obey — he turns us, and he works in us to will and to do. He gives repentance and faith, and he sheds abroad his love in our hearts. Here you have one part of divine truth, a part never to be overlooked. But there is another class of texts, which, with equal clearness, bring into view the rational, moral agency of man. While God causes his people to walk in his statutes, they themselves are required to walk and do walk in his statues. While he inclines their hearts to obey, their own hearts incline to obey. If he turns them from their evil ways, they themselves turn. If he gives them a new heart and a new spirit, they make themselves a new heart. If he creates in them a clean heart, they cleanse their own hearts. He gives them faith, and they believe; repentance, and they repent. He causes them to love, and they love. He works in them to will and to do, and they will and do. He produces love, joy, meekness and all other graces in them, and they exercise these graces. He keeps them from sin, and they keep themselves from sin. "Now in what way" says a very judicious writer* "are we to determine the meaning of these two classes of texts? Are we to consider them as contradictory? Are we at liberty to adopt the one class as true, and to reject the

* Jeremiah Day, D. D., LL. D.

Digitized by Google

other as false, or so to explain them away as to leave them no determinate signification? If men incline their own hearts to obedience, must we conclude that God does not incline them? If they are required to make themselves a new heart, does it follow that God does not give them a new heart? If they turn from sin to righteousness, is it certain that God does not cause them to turn,—and is it certain that their obedience is independent of his agency? Are we not bound on the contrary to put such a construction upon the two classes of texts, that both may be admitted as true? And how is this to be done? Evidently by considering the agency of men as the consequence of the agency of God. If he causes them to walk in his commands, they do actually thus walk. If he makes them obedient, they really obey. If he turns their hearts, they themselves turn. If he gives them a new heart and a new spirit, they exercise the affections of a new heart. Not that the agency of God is identified with the agency of men; but the one is the consequence of the other, is dependent on the other. His act in turning them is not their act in turning. Their obedience is not his obedience. His making them a new heart, is not the same as their making themselves a new heart; but it is causing them to make themselves a new heart."

This author proceeds on the same general principle to explain and reconcile the different classes of texts, which relate to men as sinners, and shows that in this point of view also they are dependent on God, and that he, in his wise and righteous providence, exercises a sovereign, controlling influence over their thoughts and actions.

I might show that the representation here made of the agency of creatures as dependent upon the agency of God, and the views here given of Divine Providence, agree with the opinions of all the distinguished evangelical writers both in Europe and America. But it is enough for us, if what we believe is according to the word of God.

The doctrine of Divine Providence suggests some important practical reflections, two of which I shall lay before you.

Digitized by Google

First. The doctrine of Divine Providence is presented to our view in so clear a light that *it is easy to avoid mistakes.* The doctrine comes to us in the light which God himself has cast upon it in his word and in his works. The works and the word of God agree; they are in fact but two methods of revelation, though one of them is vastly superior to the other. "God has magnified his word above all his name." And yet this superior method of revelation presupposes the other, and cannot be rightly apprehended without attention to the other. The light of both commingled makes known the doctrine of providence so clearly, that no diligent inquirer after the truth can fail to understand it. But what does the clearest light avail to those, who love darkness rather than light? Most of the errors which prevail on this subject, arise from within. Only let men be brought to a right state of mind, and their errors will be corrected, and the obscurity which has appeared to them to be spread over the divine government will quickly pass away.

Secondly. We see here the precise *difference between rational, Scriptural piety, and enthusiasm.*

A man under the influence of true Scriptural piety, judges right as to the nature and the methods of divine providence. Accordingly he not only seeks of God the blessings which he needs, but seeks them in the appointed way. He prays for relief and comfort, and hopes that God will answer his prayers not miraculously, but according to the usual methods of his providence; and these methods he learns from Scripture and observation. He has found that God ordinarily puts forth his agency in the natural and in the spiritual world in a settled method and order; and he sees that this uniform method, called the order or laws of nature, is fitted most clearly to display the divine perfections, and to secure our welfare. All his own efforts therefore, and all his ideas of what God will do, are conformed to the truth. He expects God to act, and to succeed his actions, in the appointed way, and in no other. He prays that God would give him a harvest, and hopes that God will grant this blessing. But how? Why, according to the laws of nature; and what these

Digitized by Google

laws are every one understands. He looks to God to feed him and clothe him, to heal his sicknesses and to lengthen out his life; and all in the ways of God's appointment. He asks God to preserve him from hurtful mistakes, to guide him into the truth, and to supply all his need; and he expects these blessings to be granted in the way marked out by the word and providence of God, and in no other way. In short he regulates his thoughts and desires, his prayers, actions and expectations, according to the established principles of the divine government. And thus he thinks and prays and acts in conformity with the truth. He falls in with the divine plan. He moves in harmony with the movements of providence. He desires nothing, he prays for nothing, except in God's established method and order.

Take now the enthusiast. He prays to God, and expects God to answer prayer. In this he may be right. But he mistakes as to the manner of praying, and the manner in which God will answer prayer. He offers prayer and looks for an answer, in a way which God has not appointed, and which is suggested by his own misguided imagination. For example, he is desirous of knowing what the will of God is respecting a particular journey, or other pursuit; and he prays that God would make known his will. But how does he expect that God will make known his will? Not through his own rational faculties, exercised in the way of serious deliberation and honest inquiry. He does not deliberate; he does not pursue a diligent, rational inquiry, in order to ascertain what the will of God is. He does not attend to the events of providence or the instruction of Scripture, to see what they indicate. Nor does he think it necessary or proper to ask advice of others. He looks for an answer in a shorter way. The ordinary method of availing ourselves of patient, serious consideration, the counsel of judicious men, the manifest leadings of providence, and the teachings of Scripture, in connection with prayer, seems to him very dull, and far below the aspirings of a warm and lofty piety. He sometimes thinks that God will answer prayer and make known his will in a dream; and then, if he dreams so and so, he concludes that such is the will of God. Or

Digitized by Google

he expects God to make known his will by a direct and extraordinary suggestion to his mind, aside from the use of his rational faculties. And then if something is suggested to his mind, not in the way of rational consideration, or in the way of advice from those who are entitled to his confidence, but directly, and suddenly, and in an unaccountable manner, through the capricious actings of an excited fancy; he thinks it from God, and regulates his conduct accordingly.

A young man under the influence of enthusiasm, has his thoughts turned towards the ministry, and he prays God to teach him what he would have him to do. But he forgets that God has given him rational faculties, to be employed on this subject as well as on any other. He forgets that God has given him his word to instruct him, and so he does not diligently and patiently search it. Or if he goes to the inspired volume, he goes in an unauthorized way. He says perhaps, I will open the Bible, and the first passage which my eye falls upon shall decide. With this view, he opens the Bible, and it may be his eye at once falls upon such a passage as this; "son of man, I send thee to the house of Israel;" — or, "Go preach the gospel to every creature." This he takes to be a clear indication of the will of God respecting the case in hand. He overlooks the proper method of searching the Scriptures, that is, in the right use of his rational faculties, and all the helps in his power. He forgets that there are other passages in the Bible which relate to the question before him, as well as the first he fixed his eye upon. He forgets that the passage he may read the next minute, or the next day, is the word of God as well as the one he first read, and may be of a very different and opposite import. He takes no suitable pains to learn what is the nature of the work which he contemplates, and what are the necessary qualifications for it. He takes no pains to settle the important question, whether he now has or is ever likely to have the requisite qualifications. He does not go modestly to a minister of Christ or to an intelligent Christian for counsel. But he concludes at once, that God has made known his will by directing him, as he did, to that particular text. How

Digitized by Google

can it be supposed, he says, that God would order it so, that such a text should first of all be placed right before me, unless he meant to teach me that he does really call me to be a minister or a missionary. Now you cannot reason with such a man; for he mistakes entirely as to the principles of reasoning, and the methods of the divine providence. You cannot reason with him, for he is an enthusiast, and an enthusiast cannot be reasoned with.

A person under the influence of enthusiasm errs in the same way in judging of his own conversion. In ascertaining whether he is a pardoned sinner, and has a title to heaven, he does not attend carefully to his own heart and life, comparing them with the standard of God's word. How then does he proceed? Why perhaps he reads the words of Christ; "rejoice that your names are written in heaven;" and he concludes at once that he is in that happy state; and he is filled with joy at the thought of endless happiness, — not considering at all what the Bible teaches as to the conditions of eternal life. Perhaps he dreams that he sees Christ on the cross, and hears him say; *I die for thee, or, thy sins are forgiven thee;* and he takes his dream to be an evidence of his forgiveness, though he neither repents nor believes in Christ. I introduce these cases to illustrate the nature of enthusiasm, of which there is still a great abundance in the world. If a man resorts to any such means as are not divinely appointed, to ascertain his conversion and his title to heaven — if he relies upon any workings of his own excited fancy, or upon any supposed communication from God, except what comes in conformity with the Scriptures, to satisfy him that his sins are pardoned, he shows himself to be an enthusiast. And though an enthusiast may judge right in thinking he is a child of God, he is quite as likely to judge wrong.

You see that enthusiasm has a mixture of truth and error. The enthusiast is right in praying to God. There is no error in this, if he prays as he ought. He is right in praying often and earnestly. He is right in expecting God to answer prayer; because God has promised to do this. He is right in placing entire

Digitized by Google

confidence in God, and in the truth of his promises; only he ought to understand the promises correctly. He is right in thinking that God will actually grant the blessings which he seeks, if he seeks aright. Nor does he mistake in expecting a present and merciful agency of God in answering sincere, fervent prayer. Thus far he goes with the Bible and has truth on his side. And here you come to the place where he departs from the infallible guide, and where his mistake begins. The Bible does not teach, and providence does not teach, that God will answer prayer or make known his will, in such a way as the enthusiast supposes. It is the teaching of the Bible and of providence, that we are to learn the will of God in all ordinary cases, by the diligent use of our faculties; that God guides us as rational beings, and on uniform principles. Here is the mistake of the enthusiast. He thinks God will interpose in his providence to answer his prayers and supply his wants, in an *extraordinary* manner; not according to the uniform laws which divine wisdom has settled in the natural and moral world, but in a miraculous way. The man of enlightened, Scriptural piety believes that miracles were formerly of infinite importance for the confirmation of the truths of our religion; but that they are not necessary and are not to be expected now; and indeed that their occurrence in the ordinary course of human life, would subvert the common principles of action, and create endless confusion in the moral world. The enlightened, sober Christian believes, that God can answer prayer without miracles as well as with them. He has thus all the motives and encouragements to prayer which he could have, if God had promised a miraculous answer to prayer. And he confidently relies upon God to exert an agency in his behalf, as real, and as beneficial, as a miraculous agency could be. His prayers therefore, and his expectations of good, are all conformed to the infallible standard. He lives and moves in the region of truth and reality. His reason and conscience and all his faculties are not only active, but active in the right way. The light which guides him is a clear and certain light, coming from the sun of righteousness. But the enthusiast lives in the region of

Digitized by Google

fancies and dreams; which fancies and dreams may be very serious and very pleasing, and even sublime; but still they are fancies and dreams. And by relying upon them he deprives himself of the benefit of realities. He subjects himself to constant loss by seeking good in ways which cannot be successful, instead of those ways of divine appointment in which his success would be sure. The enthusiast may love God; but he is apt to mistake the will of God, and the methods of his providence. He may act conscientiously; but he is likely to act erroneously and strangely. He may be travelling in the way to heaven; but he travels without the advantage of a clear light and a safe guide. It may be that he goes on with a sincere and pious heart; but it is with a bewildered imagination, half the time following phantoms, and never seeing things as they are, till he arrives — and if after all he truly loves God he will arrive, at that world of light, where shadows and dreams cannot be found.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLVI.

MORAL AGENCY. PROPER MODE OF INQUIRY. ULTIMATE TEST OR STANDARD OF MORAL GOOD AND EVIL.

THE philosophy of the mind is a subject of deep interest to theological students. And the particular views which you entertain respecting it will be likely to influence your habit of thinking on some of the most important doctrines of revelation, particularly those to which the Arminian and Pelagian controversies are related.

I shall not attempt to lay before you anything like a complete system of mental philosophy. This would be incompatible with the plan of lecturing which I have contemplated, and with the Constitution of the Seminary relative to my department. The most I can promise is, to treat briefly of such parts of the general subject as will help us to elucidate important principles, either theoretic or practical, in Christian Theology. The topic which I shall more particularly consider, is Moral Agency. It is very manifest that this subject has a near and important connection with Christian Theology, inasmuch as all the duties which Christianity inculcates, all the motives it presents, and all the blessings it confers, respect man as a moral, accountable agent.

The subject being thus connected with Christian Theology, those who are preparing for the sacred office should take pains to acquire a right understanding of it, and an ability to treat other related subjects in such a manner as to make a just impression on others, even on those who have never been accustomed to philosophical discussion.

Digitized by Google

That we may investigate this subject with success, it is of special consequence that we should have our minds settled as to the proper mode of prosecuting our inquiries. It is evident in this, as in other cases, that we must derive our knowledge from known facts, and that no hypothesis and no argument, not founded on facts, can be admitted in the science of mind any more than in the science of physics. Any hypothesis in natural science, which is not supported by the evidence of facts, we regard as a dream of the imagination. We should do the same as to mental science. For example, if any one advances the position, that the mind can put forth volitions or choices without the influence of motives, we should as philosophers reject the position, unless there are well known facts to sustain it. But I am well aware that it is one thing to acknowledge this principle in words, and to have a general conviction of its truth, and a very different thing to observe it and govern ourselves by it in practice. It is surprising to find how frequently educated as well as uneducated men resort in their reasoning to the hypothetical method, though perhaps they profess to renounce it; and how much of the inconclusiveness of their arguments, and how much of the strength of objections urged against them, is owing to this circumstance. Such have been the books in common use, and such the modes of thinking which have prevailed in times past, and which have been transmitted from other generations to us, that it is no easy task to rid our minds of all that is perplexing and false, and to bring ourselves to that simple method which has been so well defended of late by the ablest writers on mental philosophy, and which so obviously agrees with the dictates of common sense and the established rules of investigation on all other subjects. On this point, I quote one passage from Dr. Upham's Treatise on the Will. In regard to the discussion of the various questions respecting the Will he says; "It will be our desire to rest mainly upon facts and the obvious deductions from them, and to avoid mere speculation. The indulgence of speculation, the giving loose to discursive flights, is often flattering to pride of intellect, but unless controlled by a frequent recurrence to facts, it is not

Digitized by Google

favorable to the ascertainment of truth. The inquiries before us, so far at least as the mode of conducting them is concerned, ought to be prosecuted in essentially the same manner as our inquiries into the physical world. What we wish to know are the simple facts that exist, and the general laws which these facts obviously develop and clearly prove, in distinction from mere conjectures. We apprehend that this course, if we promise ourselves a favorable issue, is necessary in all discussions respecting the mind."

According to the views which I have thus briefly suggested on the subject before us, it is not to be our inquiry, what we should think would be, or what must be, the attributes and circumstances of a moral agent, or the manner of his acting. We should no more make this our inquiry, than we should inquire in natural history, what must be or what we should think would be the properties of an Elephant, or the instincts of a Bee; or in physical science, what must be the properties of a magnet, or what we should think would be the operations of electricity or the phenomena of solar light. The chief object of investigation in the different branches of natural science is to observe and arrange the phenomena exhibited before us; or in other words, to discover and classify the facts which are presented to view in different parts of the natural world. And we are to do the same in regard to a moral agent. Instead of saying such and such must be his properties, his circumstances or his mode of acting, and instead of inquiring what we should suppose them to be, our great business is to ascertain what they are. Proper attention to this one point would have prevented some of the most violent controversies which have employed the pens and agitated the passions of men, would have rendered the study of mental science simple and comparatively easy, and would have contributed much to the progress of the human mind in this branch of knowledge.

In this discussion I shall assume that man is a moral agent. And this you will see to be just as proper, as to assume that man is an intelligent agent, or that he has animal life, or that he ex-

Digitized by Google

ists; or in optics, to assume that man has the sense of seeing. We know that moral agency belongs to us just as we know that any other attribute belongs to us, that is, by consciousness, and by observation of one another. Our moral and accountable agency could never be made out by general logical arguments. Its existence and all the elements of which it is constituted are known directly as matters of consciousness. And every attempt to obtain the knowledge of them in any other way will open the door to obscurity and error.

The meaning of the proposition, that man is a moral, accountable agent, may be given in different ways. You may say, a moral agent is one who acts morally, or one who is under a moral law, or is subject to a moral government, or who exercises affections and performs actions of a moral nature, all amounting to the same thing. But it may be asked, what is a moral law? And if I say, it is that which requires moral affections and actions, it may still be asked, what are moral affections and actions? This brings us to what may be called the ultimate fact in moral science, and, to us, the practical test or standard of all moral distinctions. When we have certain affections or do certain actions, a feeling of approbation or complacency is excited, in other words a feeling that the affections or actions are right. As similar feeling is excited when we contemplate similar affections or actions in others. But when we are conscious of certain other affections in ourselves or contemplate them in others, a feeling of disapprobation or displeasure is excited, that is, a feeling that such affections or actions are wrong. This feeling takes place uniformly, so far as our minds are unperverted and act according to their nature. The fact that men in certain conditions, and under the influence of certain causes, judge differently from this, is no evidence against the existence of a uniform constitution in man, or against the reality of the distinction which has been made between moral good and evil, any more than the fact that men, under the influence of certain mental or bodily diseases, do not percieve the difference between harmony and discord in music, or between different colors, or different tastes, or between what is

Digitized by Google

true and false in Geometry, is evidence that there is no difference in reality, or that there is no fixed principle in our minds which leads us to make the distinction. But it will be found on inquiry, that there is in fact much less difference of feeling among men, as to the grand distinction between moral good and evil, than has sometimes been pretended. Let a man from strong emotions of kindness expose himself to peril and suffering to rescue a fellow creature from distress, and that fellow creature be one that had often injured him; who could witness such an act of kindness and magnanimity without a feeling of respect and admiration? Let another man from mere envy or avarice go at midnight to his sincerest friend and benefactor, quietly asleep in his bed, and with wanton cruelty murder him and his beloved family around him; who could witness such an act without a feeling of indignation and abhorrence? The sentiment of approbation or disapprobation, which arises in the mind in relation to such actions, is as uniform as the sensation of different colors at the sight of a rain-bow. So that our making this sentiment or feeling of the mind the ultimate fact in moral science, and the standard by which we are to measure moral good and evil, will subject us to no more doubt and uncertainty than we meet with in the other sciences. The moral sentiment which arises in our minds in view of the different feelings and actions of men, depends as obviously on the constitution of our nature, as any bodily sensation. And this constitution of our nature respecting moral good and evil is as uniform, as that which respects reason or memory or the bodily senses. We know that these faculties and senses, when disordered, vary from the same faculties and senses in a healthy state. But variations, arising from such a cause, never weaken our confidence in our reason or memory or the bodily senses, or prevent our appealing to them as a rule of action. In like manner, although the moral sensations of some men are disordered and false, we still make our appeal to our moral constitution, or to the sentiment which uniformly arises in our minds in relation to different actions, as the ultimate standard of morals, or the measure of

Digitized by Google

right and wrong. We are not indeed always to refer to it in a formal manner, or to the exclusion of other rules of judgment. But we shall find that every other intelligible rule of judgment presupposes or implies this. Even the divine law, which is most commonly and most justly referred to as the standard of moral virtue, ultimately depends upon this for its binding force, certainly it does fully correspond with it. The divine law, requiring us to love God and our neighbor, is obligatory upon us, because we have a moral nature, that is, because we are so constituted that we are capable of moral affection, and approve in ourselves and others what is required, and disapprove what is forbidden. But the same divine law is not obligatory on brute animals. And why? Because they are not moral agents; that is, they are not so formed as to be capable of any emotion or action respecting moral objects, or any feeling of approval or disapproval in view of such emotion or action. The applicability of the divine law to us and its reasonableness in relation to us depend entirely upon our having what we call a moral nature. Mere intelligence, if it could exist without moral feeling, could not make us proper subjects of God's law. If we had the faculty of knowing the existence and some of the attributes of God without any affection of love, or any faculty or capacity to love, and without any feeling that we ought to love such a Being, or that we are blame-worthy for not loving; what we mean by moral obligation would be wanting. Moral obligation so entirely depends upon our having a moral nature, and the feeling of approbation or disapprobation in view of our moral affections, that if such affections, and such approbation and disapprobation, and all capacity for them, should cease in mankind, nothing like moral obligation would for a moment remain. That the Governor of the world should in such a case command human beings to love and punish them for not loving, would be no more consistent with justice, and would no more promote the ends of moral government, than for him to command a brute animal to love and to punish it for not loving. To us, possessed as we are of moral sentiment, how utterly inconsistent would it be with the confi-

Digitized by Google

dence we repose in God, to suppose that he exacts love of any of his creatures and punishes them for the want of love, when in fact they have no faculty of love, and no consciousness that the requisition of love is just, or that they are ill-deserving for not complying with it. The moral government of God is a concern between him and creatures endued with a moral nature. The rectitude of his government implies that there is a moral sense in his subjects, approving his law and disapproving what is contrary to it. So that to suppose that the Supreme Being administers a moral government, involving commands and penalties towards those who have no faculty of moral perception agreeing with that government, is to suppose what would be subversive of all our notions of God's attributes.

This then is the sum of what my time will allow me to say on this part of the subject. We are so constituted, that we necessarily make a distinction among our different affections and actions, approving some and disapproving others. In regard to these affections and actions, we feel and judge as we do from the nature which God has given us. And it is as impossible for us, without a total perversion of our moral faculties, to feel and judge differently in regard to the primary distinctions in moral subjects, as it is to have different sensations respecting the objects of our senses. It is you well know impossible for us to be pleased with pain or displeased with pleasure, and with such a nature as we possess it is equally impossible for us to approve of malice, or to disapprove of benevolence. Give a man honey to taste, and you excite in him the sensation of sweetness; present a prism to his eye, and you excite the sensation of different colors; speak to him, and you excite the sensation of sound. In like manner, present to a man's mental eye the feeling of benevolence and the actions that flow from it, and you excite in him instant approbation. Present the contrary, and you excite disapprobation. If he attends to the affections in his own mind, he will either approve or condemn himself. If he observes them in others, he will either approve or condemn them. And if at any time the impulse of his own passions leads him to justify the

Digitized by Google

wrong affections of himself or of others, he will ultimately condemn himself for it as an act of violence done to his moral nature.

On this principle let the sacred preacher faithfully exhibit before the minds of men the glorious benevolence or goodness of God, displaying itself in the ten thousand forms of happiness which it produces. I say not that they will certainly love such a Being. But I say, that they must inwardly approve of his character; and that they must either love him, or disapprove of themselves for not loving. To this constitution of our nature, to this moral sentiment uniformly produced in our minds by him who created us, the prophets and apostles made their last appeal in their addresses both to the good and the bad; and we must do the same. We must indeed speak of the divine law as our standard. It is in truth our standard, a perfect standard, set before us by him who knows what we are, and who has a right to command. But the divine law as written in the Scriptures, or as announced by the sacred preacher, is just and good in relation to those only, who have substantially the same law written on the heart;—it is just and good only in relation to *moral beings*, capable of perceiving its justice and goodness and of conforming to its demands. Our obligation to obey any law of God must depend on the principle, that the command is what our moral nature declares to be right, that it recommends itself directly to our conscience, or that it is such a law as will meet the approbation of our conscience as soon as we have competent knowledge. In this latter case, in which we are at present destitute of competent knowledge, instead of forming a judgment directly on the propriety of the law, we fix our eye upon the character of the Lawgiver and are satisfied that a law coming from him must be worthy of obedience.

But I need not pursue this discussion farther, as the subject is one on which every man is competent to judge, and actually does judge, however unable he may be to describe philosophically the grounds of his judgment. If I ask you what moral obligation is, or what you mean by the phrase, I ought to do such a thing, or

Digitized by Google

it is my duty or I am bound to do it, your reply must rest ultimately upon the moral sentiment in your own minds. You may indeed say with perfect propriety, that you ought to do a thing, because God commands it. But your saying this implies that you are persuaded of the truth of the principle, that you owe obedience to such a Being as God, whatever his commands may be. Had you not already the persuasion that you ought to obey God, you certainly would not assign his command as the reason why you ought to perform any particular action. What then do you mean by your saying that you ought to obey God? Do you mean anything more or less than this, that you are so constituted, or have such a nature, that you do and must regard obedience to God as right, and must feel a satisfaction in your own mind when you render obedience, but must disapprove a refusal to obey, and reproach yourself when you are chargeable with it? You thus refer ultimately to the conviction of your own conscience or to the moral sentiment of your own mind as the standard or rule of your obligation. Had you not such a conscience, such a moral nature, you would never say, I ought or am under obligation to do this, or to refrain from that. We may not always admit the principle above stated in words, but we shall find that in all our arguments to prove men's obligation or to produce in their minds a feeling of it, we make our ultimate appeal to their moral sense, or to the constitution of their moral nature. We ask them, is it not right to love that Being, who is infinitely benevolent and who has shown unceasing kindness to you? Is it not duty to avoid what such a Being has forbidden, and what will injure your fellow creatures and yourselves? That is, do you not *perceive* this to be the case, or have you not such a nature that you *feel* it to be so?

This appeal to the moral sense as the ultimate test or measure of right and wrong, is often made by the prophets and apostles, and by Jesus of Nazareth more than by any other. And this conspired with other things to make him the best of all teachers.

But I wish here to guard you against supposing, that it is our

Digitized by Google

feeling of approbation or disapprobation that constitutes or makes things right or wrong. Some expressions in Thomas Brown's Lectures, if taken by themselves, would seem to favor this supposition; though after a careful attention to what he advances on the subject, I cannot think he meant more than this, that it is our rational and moral nature, or the feeling of approbation or disapprobation which arises in our minds in view of our affections and actions, which renders those affections and actions right or wrong *in relation to us*, or which renders *us* accountable for the affections and actions as right or wrong in *us*, we being possessed of such an intellectual and moral nature — the same things not being right or wrong to beings destitute of rational and moral faculties. According to the construction then which candor would put upon Dr. Brown's remarks, it is this moral capacity in us that makes us capable of discerning the rectitude or obliquity of moral actions. The fact is, that the very sentiment of approbation implies that what we approve is right, right in itself. We look at it, we see what it is, and say *it is right*, — not that by pronouncing it right we make it right. I say, that what we, in the proper exercise of our moral faculties, see to be right, is right *in itself*. Its rectitude lies in its own nature. If any moral being in the created universe loves God, he does what is just and right. If we know that he has love to God, we approve the affection, and pronounce it right. If we are ignorant of it, it is *to us*, as though it did not exist. But other moral beings who are acquainted with it, perceive and acknowledge its rectitude. And if that one moral agent, who loves God, were the only created being endued with a moral nature; he would be conscious of the rectitude of his own affection, and God would regard it with approbation. But suppose further, that no moral being existed besides God; in that case the moral sentiment would exist in the mind of God, and would exist there in perfection. God would be conscious of the complete rectitude of his own affection, and would feel a perfect complacency in himself. Being possessed of absolute perfection, he would necessarily feel perfect self-approbation. It is then *in God himself*, that all moral excel-

Digitized by Google

lence originally exists. In him it is found in its underived, unbounded fulness. And when from eternity he thought of other moral beings, that is, beings to be created by him with a moral nature bearing a resemblance to his own, he knew that it would be right for such moral beings to love him supremely, and to be benevolent to one another; and that it would be wrong for them, instead of loving him and one another, to be selfish and malevolent. This discernment of what would be right and wrong in creatures, existed in the mind of God before creation began, as perfectly as it does now. To God therefore we are to look for the original spring, the foundation and the standard of all moral excellence. There is no moral excellence independently of God, none but what is derived from him and conformed to his image. Here is the only ultimate basis and standard of moral excellence. You may say, that the basis of the distinction between moral good and evil existed eternally in *the nature of things*. But you must not forget that previously to creation, or eternally, there was in fact no *nature of things*, unless you call the nature of *God* the nature of *things*. It was indeed eternally the intention of the divine mind to create things, that is, moral beings, in whose very nature the distinction of good and evil would be founded. And speaking with some latitude, we might say, that all those things which were to be created, existed eternally in the mind of God. But the plain truth is, not that created things eternally existed, but that God eternally purposed that they *should* exist.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLVII.

MORAL AGENCY. DIFFERENT STATES OF CONSCIENCE CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO MORAL AGENCY. AMBIGUITY OF WORDS. THE MORAL TEST APPLIED TO BODILY ACTION.

It is an important fact that conscience, or the moral sense, which was considered in the last Lecture as an ultimate standard of right and wrong, has in different men, and in the same men at different times, various degrees of clearness and activity. It may be so cultivated and improved that it will do its office promptly and correctly, will be always awake and always in earnest, and will give its decisions with a power which will fill the soul with joy or with anguish. On the other hand it may be so neglected, depraved and stupified, that for a time it will either not act at all, or act erroneously. Men bring their conscience into this diseased and torpid state by acting against their convictions. They disregard the admonitions of the inward monitor, till he becomes weary and ceases to admonish. Through the influence of indulged sin, the light of the soul is in a great degree extinguished. Still it is not wholly extinguished. The moral faculty is not destroyed. It is rather like the eye which sees not, because it is shut, or because a dark body is interposed and conceals the object. The organ of vision remains, and actual sight will return, as soon as the eye is opened or the intervening body removed. In those wicked men who are for the present most free from inward reproofs, conscience will at length awake to fidelity, and will execute a dreadful retribution for all that has been done during its slumbers.

Digitized by Google

But these variations of conscience involve a difficulty respecting our present subject. For if moral agency implies that we have in our minds a feeling of approbation in view of what is right and of disapprobation in view of what is wrong, then where is moral agency at the time when this feeling is entirely suppressed, or what is worse, when that which is right is disapproved, or that which is wrong is approved; when men, in the language of Scripture, put light for darkness and darkness for light, good for evil and evil for good.

To assist in the solution of this difficulty, I offer the following remarks.

First. In the state of moral dormancy above described, conscience is not *wholly* inactive. From our own experience, and from the acknowledgments of others, we conclude that in a state of the greatest hardness and insensibility, when men seem entirely to overlook the evil of sin, they frequently suffer such self-reproach and remorse, and such fears of the wrath to come, that they choose annihilation rather than existence. Conscience then, even in the most abandoned, does speak and warn and reprove; and it often requires all the efforts which wicked men can make, to keep up the appearance of a cheerfulness which they do not feel.

But there is a farther solution at hand. If, during the state of *probation*, conscience is for a time suppressed and buried in sleep; in a state of *retribution*, it will awake to perform its office. And when a man's conscience is thoroughly awake, he will review the feelings and actions which took place during the time of moral slumber, and will regard them with a strong disapprobation of himself. The properties of moral agency, which before existed, but lay concealed, will then become visible. Possessing as he did a moral nature through the whole period of his existence, he was always the subject of feelings morally wrong, though he did not at the time faithfully consider and disapprove them. But in the future state, his moral faculty being disencumbered and invigorated, he will take those feelings into view, and pass a sentence of condemnation upon himself on account of them.

Digitized by Google

We are not then to consider it essential to the existence of a man's moral agency in a state of probation, that he should have a conscience which will in all cases, at the very time when the actions take place, actually approve what is right and disapprove what is wrong. But it certainly does belong to a moral agent, that when his conscience is free from disorder and properly enlightened, he will thus approve or disapprove his own moral acts. It follows from his very constitution, that this will ultimately be the case.

The foregoing remarks show the mistake of those, who think it essential to moral agency and accountability, that there should be, at all times, a correct present discernment of the rule of duty, or actual knowledge of law. It would be very easy to show that moral affection may exist in one who has at the time no distinct apprehension of its nature, and no present feeling of approbation or disapprobation. Our minds may be so occupied with other subjects, or so perverted by sinful indulgence, as to be for a time prevented from this. But it would be very unreasonable to suppose, that an affection or action changes its nature, because at the time we are regardless of it. It is a fact of constant occurrence with children and with men, that they inconsiderately and without any present feeling of blame-worthiness indulge affections and perform actions, which afterwards on reflection they find to have been wrong. These affections and actions were wrong at the time they took place; but through their own fault the wrong was then overlooked. Now it is perceived. This general fact is implied in every instance, in which we labor to convince men of those past offences of which they have been insensible, and of the mistakes they have heretofore made respecting their own conduct. It is implied in the case of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, who afterwards, in a better state of mind, saw that what he once thought an act of piety, was in reality an act of malice and cruelty. It is implied in the case of a converted heathen. The convert is satisfied that some things which he once did without conscious guilt, were great evils in the sight of God. So it is in a greater or less degree with every one who is enlightened from above. Many of his feelings and actions,

Digitized by Google

which he once thought harmless, he now knows to have been morally wrong. I say then it is not essential to our moral agency, or to the existence of moral good or evil in us, that we should at the time have a distinct consideration or conception of a moral law, or a sensible approbation or disapprobation of our feelings and actions. Moral good or evil does in fact sometimes exist without this. This therefore cannot be regarded as essential to the existence of moral agency. But every moral agent has a constitution of mind, which will lead him, first or last, to a knowledge of good and evil in himself, and to a feeling of self-approbation or disapprobation on account of his own moral actions. Such a mental constitution must therefore be considered as an essential property of a moral agent. And this constitution undoubtedly belongs to every human being from his first existence.

I have here one observation to suggest as an inference from the general principle above laid down. The observation is intended specially for gospel ministers. As to the grand distinction among the feelings and actions of men, we may make our appeal directly to their conscience. Less of the form of reasoning is necessary than is commonly supposed. The primary truths of religion should be held up directly before the minds of men, whether learned or unlearned. The more you have to do with conscience, the less advantage do you give to the subtlety of the understanding and the corruption of the heart. Appeal directly, as Jesus did, to man's moral sense.

Before applying the general principle I have endeavored to establish to the particular faculties and operations of the mind, I shall forewarn you of the perplexities and mistakes to which you will be exposed from the ambiguity of words. Many if not most of the words, which are employed on the subject before us, are employed in a variable manner. The word *knowledge* is sometimes used to denote an act of the mind and *understanding* to denote a faculty, which we call speculative, implying nothing of a moral nature. At other times, the words denote what is most spiritual. The same is true of the word *faith*, or *believe*. In some cases it denotes an act of the mind which is merely intellectual. In other

Digitized by Google

cases it includes affection. The word *love* has a very variable sense, denoting an attachment sometimes of an inferior nature, and sometimes superior, and this too in relation to the same object. The words *power* and *ability* have different significations at different times. Other instances almost without number might be adduced. In consequence of this variable sense of words, it becomes necessary to attend to all the circumstances which can enable us to discover in what sense words are used in each particular case. And when we ourselves speak or write on a subject so important and so difficult as the one now under consideration, we should endeavor, by exact definitions, by discriminating epithets, and by all the means in our power, to make the signification of our words perfectly apparent.

It is specially necessary for us to remember that the very words, which I have used to point out the standard of moral actions, and the distinction between good and evil, are liable to such variations of sense as may occasion no little confusion in our reasoning. We say it is a proof that any feeling or action is morally good or evil, that it excites in us a sentiment of approbation or disapprobation. But approbation and disapprobation are very different things in relation to different objects and to different rules of judging. We approve of a mechanical instrument, if it is suited to our purpose, and disapprove it, if otherwise. To approve in this sense is the same thing as to say, it is good for our use, or adapted to the end designed; to disapprove is the opposite. We use these words in respect to civil relations and the rule of civil conduct. If a man has acted agreeably to these relations or to this rule of conduct, we say he has done right, whatever may be true of him in respect to a higher rule of action.

Looking upon man as sustaining the social and domestic relations, we approve the affections which according to the constitution of his nature belong to these relations, and which are adapted to diffuse happiness through the domestic and social state. In regard to these relations, we pronounce such affections to be right. But our approbation of these affections, regarded in this light, implies no approbation of them in a higher view. We know it to be sometimes

Digitized by Google

the case, that a man who possesses great tenderness of conjugal or paternal affection, is guilty of grossly violating the laws of civil society. His conduct in relation to domestic life we approve; his conduct in relation to civil law we at the same time disapprove.

The highest of all the relations which we are capable of sustaining, is our relation to God; and the highest law is the divine law. This law prescribes first of all the affections we owe to God. Now when we find our affections or the affections of others corresponding with this divine law, we have the feeling of approbation in the highest sense. When we find such affections wanting and the contrary existing, our disapprobation is excited. This is the approbation or disapprobation which is chiefly intended whenever we speak on the subject of religion. Here we regard man as a moral or religious being, — as related to God, — as under divine law, and to be approved or disapproved before the divine tribunal, as he is obedient or disobedient to this law. Whatever may be his feelings and actions in regard to his inferior relations, if he is faulty here, he is regarded with disapprobation.

The foregoing remarks show with sufficient clearness in how many senses we use the words approbation and disapprobation. Other words, relative to this subject, as good and evil, right and wrong, have the same variety of senses. And this variety arises from the same cause as that above mentioned, namely, the reference which the words have to different relations, and to different standards of judgment. We apply the word good to a house, a carriage, a musical instrument, or an article of food, as familiarly as to a moral agent. But we refer to things of a very different nature, and to different standards of judgment. A house, a carriage, a musical instrument or any article of food is good, if it is suited to answer the purpose intended. A virtuous moral agent is called good, because he is conformed to the high standard of God's law. Now it is true that we have occasion to speak of the affections and actions of men, even the same affections and actions, as standing in different relations, and to be judged of by different rules. In reference to one relation and one rule of judgment, we call an affection or action good or right. But perhaps that affection or ac-

Digitized by Google

tion has no relation at all to a higher standard; or if it has, it may have no conformity to it, and so, in reference to that higher standard, it cannot be called good.

It is to be kept in mind through the whole of this discussion, and wherever moral agency in the higher sense is concerned, that the words good and evil, right and wrong, approbation and disapprobation, and others of like kind, are used in the higher sense, that is, in reference to moral objects. They are used in reference to that spiritual law, which marks out our duty to God and to our fellow men. A careful remembrance of this will be of great use in preventing obscurity and confusion and giving clearness to our discussions.

Having made these preliminary remarks, I proceed to apply the standard of good and evil to particular mental and bodily actions.

I begin with *external* or *bodily actions*. In what light are these to be regarded? Are they in themselves of a moral nature? that is, objects of approbation or disapprobation in themselves considered? Or are they so only in reference to the intention, design or affection of the agent? That they are not so, in themselves considered, is evident from the fact, that in all those instances in which they take place contrary to the intention of the agent, or without any intention, it is impossible for us to consider them as either praise-worthy or blame-worthy. A parent entirely bereft of reason, or under the influence of a spasmodic convulsion, inflicts a mortal wound on a beloved child. Here the fatal motion of the parent's arm, not arising from any malevolent feeling or intention, cannot be regarded as any more blame-worthy, than the falling of a tree, that should occasion the same unhappy event. Again; a parent sees his little child furiously attacked by a savage beast. As the only possible means of saving the child from instant death he discharges a pistol at the beast, but unhappily his own child is the victim. Look now upon that loving parent, pierced with sorrows which neither words nor tears can express. Is he the object of your disapprobation? These and all other cases, in which it is apparent that bodily action or the effect which follows

Digitized by Google

it does not proceed from the intention of the agent, show clearly that the morality of bodily action, and the approbation or disapprobation which it excites in us, respects the intention or feeling of the agent, or what is commonly called the motive. Nothing can be more evident than this.

But as an external action, which is beneficial, is generally prompted by a benevolent disposition, and an external action which is directly hurtful by a malevolent disposition, the most careful discrimination is necessary to guard against mistake. The impression made on our minds is that of a uniform connection between the visible action and the inward intention or motive. As this connection appears so uniform, and as bodily actions are understood to be visible signs of inward and invisible affections, we are accustomed to speak of bodily actions, as though they were in reality good or evil. In this way we often attribute to external actions qualities which really belong only to the disposition or intention of the agent, and which cannot with propriety be attributed to any external actions, except in relation to the mind. There is no proposition more certain than this, that outward actions are morally good or evil, not in themselves, but relatively to the state of the mind from which they proceed. Our moral constitution is such that we cannot either approve or condemn external actions in ourselves or in others, except as we refer to the intention from which they proceed. It is the state of the mind, the disposition, intention or feeling, which we really consider to be good or bad, while we regard external actions only as manifestations of what the state of the mind is.

Here you see in what sense external actions are commanded or forbidden by the divine law. This law, taken in the strictest sense, respects bodily actions, not in themselves considered, but in relation to the inward intention or feeling of the agent. If bodily actions should not stand in this relation, and should not indicate the disposition or intention of the agent, they would cease to come under the cognizance of the divine law. What the law requires and prohibits is primarily and strictly the acting of the heart, whether this is internal merely, or shows itself in

Digitized by Google

external action. Why then, it is asked, does the law in any instance literally require and forbid external action, and that only, making no mention of that internal affection, which is here declared to be the essence of obedience or disobedience? I answer, because the law is addressed to those, whose judgment of moral good and evil does naturally and constantly refer to the heart; to those, who possess such a constitution of mind, that they cannot attribute moral good or evil to bodily actions, except as they unfold the intention or disposition of the mind. Whenever outward actions are by the moral law required or forbidden, they are required or forbidden as expressions of what is inward. According to this well known principle, to require the outward actions is to require the dispositions or intentions of the mind, from which they ought to proceed. For example, when we are required to call upon God, which in itself is an outward act, — we are required to have that state of mind which prompts to prayer. Merely to use the words of prayer without inward piety is not real obedience to the divine command. When we are required to give to the poor, we are really required to possess that disposition which prompts to deeds of charity. Again, when the law says, "Thou shalt not kill," it forbids the act of killing a man, as proceeding from a malicious intention. No outward act, not proceeding from such an intention, could be considered as violating the divine law, though it should chance to occasion the death of human beings, and even though it should be designed to occasion their death; as when a civil officer executes the sentence of the law upon murderers.

Let me add, that the particular state of mind, required or forbidden, must be understood to be that which naturally corresponds with the outward action, or from which the outward action naturally and directly proceeds. It occurs frequently, that, although the outward act required does in fact proceed from an intention of the mind, it does not proceed from the *right* intention, and of course is not obedience. So, on the other hand, when the outward act, which is prohibited, arises not from the wrong state of mind which naturally corresponds with the action or from which

Digitized by Google

it naturally proceeds, but from some other materially different, it is not to be regarded as disobedience. One of the great objects of moral and religious instruction is to detect the windings and fallacies of the heart in relation to this subject, and to show clearly what particular dispositions of mind ought to influence men in their outward actions, and to prevent them from supposing, that they can render true obedience to God, while under the influence of unauthorized motives.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLVIII.

THE TEST APPLIED TO OUR SENSATIONS OR PERCEPTIONS; TO ACTS MERELY INTELLECTUAL; AND TO VOLITIONS.

HAVING satisfied ourselves that we are to consider external actions to be good or evil, only as they relate to the intention or disposition which prompts them, or in other words, that they have no moral good or evil, except what they derive from that state of mind from which they result, we shall proceed to examine *the different affections or acts of the mind itself.*

First. The mind acts in the way of *perceiving external objects through the medium of the senses.* We have the sensations of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. Are these of a moral nature? Are they either praise-worthy or blame-worthy? The answer is obvious. No one regards himself with approbation or disapprobation for having the sensations of color or sound or taste. These sensations, considered simply by themselves, cannot be either commanded or forbidden. Their existence shows neither obedience nor disobedience. A man sees the light of the sun and hears the sound of thunder and tastes the sweetness of honey, equally, whether he is good or bad. These sensations stand in no relation to the rule of duty, any more than a man's having two hands.

I have said that merely having the sensations above mentioned shows neither obedience nor disobedience to the moral law, and has no direct relation to law. And yet it is obvious that certain situations of body or states of mind may be required, which

Digitized by Google

may be the means of exciting these sensations; and in this way, our having or not having the sensations may be indirectly or consequentially a matter of moral obligation. Should we be commanded to go out of a dungeon that we might see the light of day, or to pass through a blooming orchard that we might smell its fragrance, or to visit a stranger that we might hear the story of his sufferings; we should be under obligation; but the obligation would evidently respect the voluntary situations or acts which precede the sensations intended.

Let us next inquire into *those operations of the mind which are purely intellectual*, as the knowledge of mathematical truth, and of the laws which regulate the natural world, indeed the knowledge of any truth, so far as it is perceived by the intellect merely, without any affection. Now does the consciousness of these intellectual acts, or the perception of them in others, excite a feeling of approbation or disapprobation? We do indeed set a high price upon our rational powers, and upon the acquisitions we make in knowledge, as we do also upon our earthly possessions. But who ever regarded any of these as in themselves the objects of moral approbation?

But it must not be forgotten that in the acquisition of knowledge men are often actuated by moral affections, and that under the influence of these affections they make efforts which are very commendable. Knowledge, standing thus connected with commendable motives and efforts, comes itself to be considered as very commendable. Still, all which we regard as commendable or worthy of approbation in knowledge, is its connection with praiseworthy motives, those motives and the efforts prompted by them, being the real object of our approbation. The position I would maintain becomes perfectly obvious, when we consider the case of a man, who has been prompted to acquire knowledge by unworthy motives. There being nothing praise-worthy in his motives, we can feel no approbation of him, or complacency in him, on account of his having acquired knowledge. Nor can any man, whose conscience is awake, ever approve himself for the mere acquisition or possession of knowledge, separately from any good

Digitized by Google

dispositions which may have prompted him to the acquisition or use of it, any more than for the mere possession of wealth or any external advantage. This view of the subject is strongly supported by the Scriptures, which teach us that merely knowing the will of God is so far from deserving approbation, that it enhances the guilt of disobedience.

There is one source of mistake in regard to this subject, against which we must guard with particular care, and that is, the frequent use of the words knowledge, understanding, and others of similar import, in a high and spiritual sense, implying cordial attachment to the object. This source of misapprehension has already been hinted at. The Scriptures often speak of knowing God and Christ, and of understanding the things of religion, as implying real holiness. An Apostle says, "He that loveth God knoweth God." Now those, who are conversant with the phraseology of Scripture and of common religious discourse, are very apt to have in their thoughts more or less of this spiritual sense of the words, even when we mean to use them to denote merely what is intellectual or speculative. In the discussion of this subject, it therefore becomes highly important to show plainly, that we employ the words to denote the act of the mind in merely apprehending any religious truth, exclusively of all emotion. Now if we bring this intellectual act distinctly under consideration, separately from all those motives and states of mind which may be connected with it, we are satisfied at once that it is not of a moral nature, and can never be regarded either with approbation or disapprobation.

The result is, that acts or states of mind, purely intellectual, cannot as they are in themselves be enjoined as duty. When they are enjoined in Scripture, they are to be understood as comprising those affections or motives which are in themselves objects of approbation or complacency.

I might here show how far our intellectual faculties and acts are under the influence of our moral state. It is manifestly on account of this influence, that our intellectual acts are so often made matters of divine legislation, and are treated as indications of

Digitized by Google

character. Their relation to moral government is real, though indirect. They come under the cognizance of law, just so far as they are influenced by those affections, which are in themselves morally good or evil, and wholly on account of such influence. What and how important this influence is, may be more particularly considered in a subsequent Lecture.

We shall now proceed to the consideration of *volition*, or the action of the will. That our investigation may be in any measure satisfactory, the meaning of the words relating to the subject must be definitely settled.

Formerly, the words will, volition, voluntary, and others of like signification, were for the most part used by respectable writers, in a very extensive sense, and denoted every thing which could be considered as morally right or wrong. All the affections were considered as affections of the will, and they were considered as good or evil, because they belonged to the will. Thus the word will was used in a very large sense, signifying all that we mean by the moral faculty, or by our moral nature. But the progress of metaphysical and moral science, and indeed the convenience of common discourse, has shown the expediency of making a more particular classification of the faculties and operations of the mind, and of using the words which designate them in a more limited and more definite sense. Volition or willing is now used by accurate writers on mental philosophy, and generally I think in common discourse, to signify that determination or act of the mind, which is immediately connected as a cause with some particular action of the body, or some particular direction of the thoughts or faculties of the mind. According to the constitution of our nature, the limbs move and the thoughts are employed in a particular manner in consequence of a certain act or determination of the mind, called volition or willing. Thus I say, I will to move my hand, or I choose to employ the faculties of my mind in such a study. The acts of the mind, as well as bodily acts, are in such cases influenced by a previous determination or choice. Volition relates to both kinds of action, though not always with the same immediate and perfect control.

Digitized by Google

The word will is used by Locke in exactly the same sense, as I have given it. He says; "We find in ourselves a power to begin or forbear, continue or end several actions of our minds and motions of our bodies barely by a thought or preference of the mind, ordering or as it were commanding the doing or not doing such or such a particular action. This power, which the mind has thus to order the consideration of any idea or the forbearing to consider it, or to prefer the motion of any part of the body to its rest and vice versa in any particular instance, is that which we call the *will*. The actual exercise of that power by directing any particular action or its forbearance is what we call volition or willing. The forbearance of that action, consequently to such order or command of the mind, is called *voluntary*, and whatsoever action is performed without such a thought or order of the mind, is called *involuntary*." Again he says; "Volition it is plain is an act of the mind, knowingly exerting that dominion it takes itself to have over any part of the man, by employing it in, or withholding it from any particular action. And what is the will but a faculty to do this? And is that faculty anything more in effect than a power, the power of the mind, to determine its thought to the producing, continuing or stopping any action, as far as it depends on us?"

A late respectable writer says, "The word will is taken in a greater or less latitude. It signifies, according to some, every desire and inclination, every preference and choice. According to others, volitions or the acts of the will are properly such acts of the mind as result in some change in the body or mind. The whole active or voluntary power of man consists in an ability, when he chooses to exercise it, to alter the train of thoughts by turning the mind from one subject of contemplation to another, and in the ability to move the members of the body within certain limits. Let any man seriously inquire whether he possesses any other power or ability than this. We know that there are many things which he has no ability to perform. He cannot alter the nature of the perceptions of sense; he cannot excite in himself affections to any object at will. If a man wish to enkindle

Digitized by Google

love in his breast to any person, he cannot possibly do more than contemplate all the traits of character which are amiable in that person, or all those circumstances which have a tendency to create an interest in the person; but it is a vain effort to endeavor to love another by the mere effort of will. If we take the word will in the larger sense, all clear distinction between desire and will is removed. If we call every preference an act of volition, then obviously will and affection are confounded; for what is preference but a superior affection; and choice, if it result in no determination to act, is nothing else but preference or the cherishing of a stronger affection for one thing than another. It seems to us therefore to be altogether expedient to confine the words will and volition to those distinctly marked actions which lead to some change in body or mind. Those determinations, which lead directly to action whether of body or mind, are properly called volitions; as when I resolve to raise my head, to direct my eyes to this quarter or that, to turn my thoughts from one subject to another. These are acts which are clearly defined and which are easily distinguishable from mere desires or emotions. A late philosophical writer has indeed attempted to sweep away all controversies respecting the determination of the will by confounding will and desire together, but still he is obliged to acknowledge, that some of our desires are followed by action, or by a change in the body or mind, and these being thus clearly distinguished by their effects, and being also the most important of all our acts, it is expedient to have them put into a class by themselves with an appropriate denomination."

Admitting the use of the word will or volition which is now the prevailing use, we shall easily ascertain the meaning of voluntary. That is voluntary, whether bodily or mental, which depends on the will or which takes place in consequence of a previous volition or choice. The appetite of hunger is not voluntary; but acting to satisfy it is voluntary, eating being the consequence not of the mere appetite, but of the choice to eat. Seeing the light when the eye is open in the day time is not voluntary, but opening the eye is voluntary. Many outward and

Digitized by Google

many inward acts are of a mixed character, partly voluntary and partly involuntary. To see the moon and stars, to taste wormwood or honey, and many other acts of the senses, are of this character. The position or act of the body, preparatory to the sensation, is voluntary. The sensation itself, after the preparation is made, is involuntary.

Thus much by way of definition. I will only add, that I shall use the words under consideration in the sense defined. And I apprehend this to be the prevailing sense of the words in common discourse. I am however well aware, that will, choice and other like words, are frequently used in Scripture in a more general sense, including the disposition and all the affections and desires. If I have occasion to use the words in this sense, I will give due notice of it.

Let us now inquire whether volition or willing, in the restricted sense above mentioned, is a moral act; in other words, when taken by itself, is it praise-worthy or blame-worthy? To determine this, we must apply our moral test to particular instances of volition. And we shall begin with one as simple as possible. A man wills to move his hand. Now we are totally unable to determine whether such a volition is good or bad or indifferent, before we know the causes which prompt the volition, and the circumstances in which it takes place. If the man moves his hand to do an act of benevolence or piety, we say the volition or choice is good. Why? Because the volition is prompted by a good motive. If he wills to move his hand to commit an act of revenge and cruelty, we say the volition is bad, because it is prompted by a bad motive. If he wills to move his hand merely to relieve it of uneasiness, we say, the volition is neither morally good nor evil, for the plain reason that it is prompted by a motive that is neither morally good nor bad.

In every such case, our judgment respecting the volition depends on its circumstances. It is the consideration of the object of the volition, or the motive which prompts it, or in other words, of the affection or state of mind from which it proceeds, that determines our opinion of its character. In regard there-

Digitized by Google

fore to this instance, and other like instances, our conclusion must be that the volition or act of willing, taken by itself separate from the motive, is neither morally good nor bad; that whenever we give it a moral denomination, or form a moral judgment respecting it, we view it relatively; and that we regard it as worthy of praise or blame, according to the affection which excites it, or the object at which it aims.

For the sake of a farther illustration of this principle, it may be useful to attend to examples somewhat different. A man wills or chooses to give money to a poor family, or to a benevolent institution. The first seems to be an act of compassion, the last of piety; and we naturally think the volition or choice to perform it is praise-worthy. We think it so, because it appears to spring from a praise-worthy motive. But should we discover that the man gave his money without piety or compassion, that his object was to gain advantage to himself so that he might successfully execute his ambitious or covetous designs; we should instantly change our judgment as to the moral nature of the action and the volition, and instead of calling it benevolent or pious, we should call it selfish and base. If in any such case we examine our own moral sense, we shall find that, from the constitution of our minds, we do and must judge of a man's volitions nearly in the same way as we do of his external actions, that is, from the affection or state of mind by which he is influenced, or from the real object which he strives to attain. Seneca understood this. "The praise is not," he says, "in the deed done," he means a voluntary deed, "but in the manner of doing it. If a man visits a sick friend and watches at his pillow for charity's sake and because of his old affection, we approve it; but if he does it in hope of a legacy, he is a vulture, and only watches for the carcass. The same things," the same voluntary actions, "are honest, and dishonest. The manner of doing them and the end designed makes the difference." It is perfectly clear that in cases like those above mentioned, and in all common cases, we directly predicate moral good or evil, not of the volition, considered by itself, but of the affection or state of mind from which it

Digitized by Google

arises; or to speak with strict propriety, we predicate good or evil of the man, not with reference to his volition, understood in the limited sense intended, but with reference to his disposition or affection. Whether we choose to perform any bodily action or to exercise the mental powers on any particular subject, we can form no opinion of the moral qualities of that volition or choice, before we have ascertained the source from which it springs, or the affection which prompts it.

It is not then simply the voluntariness of any action that gives it its moral character, since the volition itself, which is the proximate cause of the action, is not by itself, separate from the motive, either praise-worthy or blame-worthy, but derives its moral quality from that affection of the heart which prompts it. Admit a particular action to be voluntary, still it is not this which makes it morally good or bad. And if an affection or state of mind is not the result of any preceding volition, it cannot be inferred from this, that it has not a moral nature; for it is ultimately the affection, the disposition or the state of the heart, which has itself a moral nature, and which imparts a moral quality to the volition which follows it.

The question is sometimes agitated, whether everything which is morally good or bad, is voluntary, and whether it is the voluntariness of an action which makes it right or wrong. Now as to external or bodily actions, it is clear that they cannot be good or bad unless they are voluntary. If they are involuntary, that is, if they do not take place in consequence of a previous act of the will, they can no more excite in us a sentiment of approbation or disapprobation, than the motions of a tree or a cloud. Whenever the mind acts upon the members of the body and causes them to move, it does it by a volition. If any action of the body is involuntary, that is, if it does not follow an act of the will, for example, the beating of the heart, or the motion of the blood, it is no part of moral agency, and we cannot feel that we are accountable for it. But because bodily action for which we are accountable is voluntary, that is, takes place in consequence of an act of the will, it does not follow that this must be the case

Digitized by Google

with all the actions of the mind. For mental actions are widely different from bodily actions. The members of the body not being possessed of an intelligent and moral nature, their motions can in no sense be considered as intelligent or moral, except as they are related to the mind. But the mind is possessed of an intelligent and moral nature, and its acts may be and in many cases must be in themselves morally good or evil. I say, they must be so, or there can be no good or evil in the universe. The laws which govern the actions of the body are materially different from those which govern the affections of the mind. Experience and consciousness teach us, that our affections are not immediately consequent upon a previous determination of the will, as our bodily actions are. So that whatever they may have, which is either praise-worthy or blame-worthy, cannot arise from this circumstance, that is, upon their being dependent upon a volition. Men are apt to think that they cannot be accountable for their mental affections and actions, unless they result from a determination of the will, because this is the case with their bodily actions. They are inclined to judge respecting the feelings and operations of the mind in the same way as respecting the actions of the body. Whereas a fair examination will show that the goodness or badness of those mental acts, called affections, does by no means depend upon the circumstance of their being or not being consequent upon a previous volition; that these acts of the mind are by themselves right or wrong, containing the essence of all the moral good and evil which can exist in man.

Edwards's views are coincident with those I have expressed. When speaking of the notion that the nature and the very existence of holiness depend on its cause, that is, on the previous choice of the mind, he says, "I suppose the way that men came to entertain this absurd notion with respect to internal inclinations and volitions themselves, namely, that the essence of their moral good or evil lies not in their nature but their cause, was that it is indeed a very plain dictate of common sense, that it is so with respect to all outward actions and sensible motions of the body, that the good or evil of them does not lie at all in motions themselves,

Digitized by Google

which taken by themselves are nothing of a moral nature, and the essence of all the moral good or evil that concerns them lies in those internal dispositions and volitions which are the cause of them. Now being always used to determine this without hesitation concerning external actions, which are commonly signified by such phrases as men's actions or doings, hence when they come to speak of volitions or internal exercises of their inclinations under the same denomination of their actions,—they unwarily determined the case must be the same with these as with external actions; not considering the vast difference in the nature of the case."

It will be remembered that Edwards often considers volitions or acts of the will the same as the affections, or as including the affections. And he shows that supposing it to be essential to their being morally good or evil, that they should follow a volition or act of the will, is manifestly absurd. And their following a volition or act of the will is what I mean by their being voluntary.

If after all, any man is inclined to say, that our moral affections are all voluntary; then I ask what is his meaning? When he says the affection of love to God which fills the heart of the converted sinner is voluntary, does he mean that the affection is a consequence of a previous volition or act of the will, and is produced by it? In other words, does he mean that the affection is preceded by an act of the will or a volition to exercise the affection? And does he mean this respecting every holy affection in the Christian's mind, and respecting every sinful affection in the sinner's mind? If this is his meaning, then I make it a question of fact, and inquire whether our consciousness or experience shows it to be so. Does a good affection rise in the Christian's mind, or a bad one in the sinner's mind, as the effect of a previous volition, or because he previously wills it? And does the experience of a good man show that the corrupt, earthly affections, which from time to time rise in his heart, are produced by a previous volition, or that they exist because he previously, or, if you please, simultaneously, chooses they should exist? Does he feel the emotion of pride or envy or ill-will in consequence of

Digitized by Google

his choosing to feel it? Does a mother love her infant child in consequence of willing to love it? But if any one means, as many do mean, that affection itself is an act of the will, and so is the same thing as volition, then I ask what sense it makes to say that an affection, which they call volition, is voluntary? And when they say that volition is voluntary, is it any more than saying that volition is volition? In metaphysical discussion any use of the word voluntary, except to denote that the thing which is said to be voluntary is consequent upon a previous volition or choice, seems to me calculated to produce confusion.

The plain fact is, that man himself, as an intelligent, moral being, acts in a variety of ways. He thinks, remembers, wills, determines, chooses, desires, loves and hates. And his being or not being praise-worthy or blame-worthy for any of these acts depends not upon their order, that is, upon the question whether they come before or after others, but upon their *intrinsic nature*. If any affection or act of the mind is not in itself morally good or bad, how can it be made so by following another act?

Digitized by Google

LECTURE XLIX.

THE AFFECTIONS IN THEMSELVES MORALLY GOOD OR EVIL. LAWS OF THE AFFECTIONS. THEIR CONNECTION WITH THE INTELLECT, AND WITH THE WILL.

WE shall next consider *the affections*. The word affection is often used to denote all the feelings or exercises of the heart. But the subject I have undertaken to investigate must limit my attention to that particular class of feelings or exercises, which relates to things of a moral or spiritual nature. There are various feelings which relate to other things, and which cannot be supposed to have any concern with our present subject.

It has been customary with many writers to use the word sensibilities or susceptibilities instead of affections or feelings of the heart. But in my view the words are not so exactly suited to the subject. And I think moreover that the use frequently made of these words is the occasion of mistake; for sensibility or susceptibility commonly denotes the mere capacity or capability of feeling or exercise, rather than actual feeling or exercise, and no one can suppose that a mere capacity, capability, or power, aside from mental action, is worthy of praise or blame.

In the present investigation, I shall use the word affections to denote the various exercises of the heart, as love and desire and their opposites, towards God and other moral and spiritual objects. And our inquiry is, whether these exercises or states of mind are of a moral nature.

To me it is very evident that all our notions of moral good

Digitized by Google

and evil, and all our feelings of approbation or disapprobation, relate ultimately to what I here call affections. In these affections of the heart, and these actings of our inward spiritual nature, we find, if I mistake not, the elements and the essence of holiness and sin.

But here, as elsewhere, our appeal is to our moral sense, which we have seen to be the ultimate test of good and evil. Suppose then we are conscious of having in our hearts true love to God or benevolence to men, — conscious of having this affection and nothing else, conscious of the emotion or exercise of love, unattended with any external action whatever. Do we not instantly say that such an affection is right? Does not the consciousness of having it excite in us a feeling of self-approbation or complacency? And does not the perception of this affection in others excite in us the feeling of approbation towards them? If so, then it has the distinguishing mark of virtue, or moral good. In this feeling of approbation, there is no necessary reference to anything else either antecedent or consequent, as the ultimate object of our approbation. It is the affection itself, that we regard as constituting moral excellence or goodness. This will appear still more evident when we advert to a fact which has been already suggested, namely, that whenever we feel approbation of any outward action, or any volition, such approbation refers ultimately to the governing affection. And if any volition or outward action, which first appears right, and so excites our approbation, is found afterwards to spring from any other than a benevolent affection, our approbation ceases at once. If on the contrary we are conscious of having a malevolent affection towards any one, though that affection has not been expressed by any injurious action, — a feeling of disapprobation or dissatisfaction with ourselves is immediately excited. And if any voluntary action which proves injurious to ourselves or others, and which at first view excites disapprobation, is afterwards discovered to have proceeded, not from any malevolent affection, but from real kindness, our disapprobation ceases. This and innumerable other instances make it certain that we do and must regard malevolent

Digitized by Google

affection as being in itself moral evil, the very essence of all that is blame-worthy in man.

The view we have taken of this subject is confirmed by the Holy Scriptures. Our Saviour informs us that the sum of the law is the precept which requires love. Matt. 22: 37, "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." This is the same as saying, that the affection of love comprises everything which is required of us as duty or moral virtue. And the Apostle Paul, speaking of moral virtue or duty in regard to our fellow men, teaches that all branches of it are contained in love. Rom. 13: 8—10, "Owe no man anything but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." This is very plain. The Scriptures inform us, that God looketh on the heart; and in various ways they pass a sentence of condemnation upon everything which does not proceed from right affection, while they approve and honor such affection as implying all that is excellent and praise-worthy. In all this, the Scriptures perfectly coincide with the unperverted sentiment of our minds; and especially with the practical judgment of Christians. It results as directly and necessarily from the constitution of our rational and moral nature, that we approve benevolent affections and disapprove the contrary, as it results from the constitution of our physical nature, that we have a sensation of sweetness from the taste of honey, or of hardness from the feeling of a stone, or of pain from the cutting of our flesh. And just so far as our philosophy differs from this, it differs from the teachings of Christ and the apostles as to the nature of that which the moral law requires.

Is it not strange that any one should mistake or doubt on a point which appears so exceedingly plain? We are accountable

Digitized by Google

beings. And for what are we accountable, if not for our actions? As to outward, bodily actions, we have seen that we are accountable for them, only as they result from the operations of the mind. It is in these inward operations, these actings of our spiritual nature, that we find the beginning and the end of what we are accountable for, that is, of moral good and evil. But it is said, and said truly, that moral good or evil cannot be predicated of all our mental acts. It must however be predicated of some of them. My question is, what class of my mental acts shall I consider to be virtuous or vicious? For which class am I accountable to God? This I would determine first by an appeal to the moral sense. But as it comes to pass that through some disorder of our moral sense, or through the ambiguity of words, or through the influence of science falsely so called, we are liable to doubt or mistake, it is important that we avail ourselves of the help of Scripture, particularly of the divine law. What does the word of God require of us as duty? It requires affection. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thou shalt love thy neighbor. It also requires all those inward and outward acts, which proceed from the affection commanded. And it of course forbids the contrary affection, and the various acts which flow from it. It is then very clear that the affection of love to God and man constitutes holiness, and the contrary to this or the want of this constitutes sin. In this conclusion, unperverted conscience and the word of God unite.

What has been said I deem sufficient to establish the point, that those affections which respect moral objects are, in their own nature, morally good or evil, and that all the good or evil predicated of our outward actions and of our volitions, is thus predicated in relation to the affections.

We are now to enter on a subject of great practical importance, and one which merits more attention than it has yet received. The subject is, the laws of the mind in regard to the affections, particularly as to the connection they have with the intellect, with volition, and with preceding affections.

Digitized by Google

Here then we are to examine in what manner we put forth our affections; in other words, in what circumstances and according to what laws our affections are exercised. We have nothing to do with conjectures or unsupported hypotheses. Our object is to ascertain facts, the facts of experience or consciousness, and the laws or principles which these facts involve.

We inquire then first *what connection the affections have with the intellect?* The answer is obvious. The exercise of any affection implies, that an object is apprehended. And this apprehension of the object is an act of the understanding or intellect. In other words the mind, as a rational or intellectual agent, perceives the object which it loves or hates. Loving or hating necessarily implies or presupposes that an object of love or hatred is in the mind's view. This is the connection which understanding has with the affections. It apprehends the objects towards which the affections are exercised. This is all the influence it ever had or can have. If we would use our understanding so as to excite love to God in our hearts, all we can do is to form as clear and vivid conceptions as possible of his amiable attributes, and the acts of his goodness. If we would excite love to God in others, we must do what we can to assist them in apprehending his character aright. We must present to the view of their understanding those things which are suited to excite their love. But we may sum up all in few words. When a man loves or hates, he does it as an intelligent being and it is utterly inconceivable that he should exercise any affections which are of a moral nature, and for which he shall be accountable, without previously using the faculty of understanding.

Our second inquiry is, *how the affections are connected with volition*, or what influence volition has over them.

Here we find the fact to be, that the affections are not the immediate effects of volition, that they are not directly under the influence of the will as the members of the body are. If any one supposes that his affections are in this sense the consequence of volition, or that they are controlled by an act of the will taken in the restricted sense, let him make the experiment. Let

Digitized by Google

him will to love some person or thing which he has always before hated and which he now hates, and see whether his heart will obey this determination of his will, as his feet obey his determination to walk in a path where he had never walked before. Or let him will to hate a favorite child, or to love him less, and see whether his heart will obey in this. If volition were in truth the proximate cause of the affections, they would uniformly follow volition. When we will to have any affection and that affection does not follow, we have evidence that the affections are not under the control of the will. There are cases innumerable in which men will and wish and choose a thousand times over to have a particular affection, but all in vain. How quickly would real Christians love God with a perfect and incessant love, if their merely willing and earnestly willing to do so would bring them to it. But the affections must be influenced by other causes.

The language of Paul, Rom. 7: 15—23, furnishes a strong illustration of the principles above stated. The Apostle says, "What I would, that do I not. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me." The fact with which I am now concerned is one which is here made very prominent in the experience of Paul. There was an inward law, the law of sin, the evil bias, the corrupt propensity, the sin that dwelt in his affections, which was not subject to his will. The determinations of his will did not control his heart. Charnock's views harmonize with those of the Apostle. He says of the "first motions" of the mind or what he calls "unpledged thoughts,"—"These are sins, though we consent not to them, because though they are without our will, they are not against our nature, but spring from an inordinate frame of a different hue from what God implanted in us. How can the first sprouts be good, if the root be evil? Not only the thought formed, but the very formation or the first imagination is evil. Voluntariness is not necessary to the essence of a sin, though it

Digitized by Google

be to the aggravation of it. It is not my will or knowledge which makes an act sinful, but God's prohibition."* Dr. George Payne says, "that admiring, loving, etc. are not invariably, even *indirectly*, the result of volition, and that they are *never directly* so; that in many cases at least, we might perhaps say in all cases, the mind cannot but admire, love, etc."†

In many instances, our affections are indeed according to our volitions; and these instances may be thought to be proofs that volition has a direct control over affection. But it is very easy to see that the bare agreement of our affections with our volitions cannot prove, that they result from our volitions as their proper and immediate cause; inasmuch as affections may be conformed to volitions, though produced by other causes. The general cause, [I mean now the external cause, and assume that the mind exists and is in a state suitable to the exercise of the affections intended,] the general cause, which excites the affections, is, as we have seen, the presentation of a suitable object. Would you fill a parent's heart with love and joy, present before him a beloved child returned after long absence, or rescued from imminent danger. Would you excite a man's disgust or abhorrence, present a disgusting or hateful object. The excitement of an affection, whether of one kind or another, depends not on an act of the will, as its immediate or proximate cause, but on the clear view of a fit object. Let such an object come before a man's mind, and the affection will follow, without any influence from a present volition. On the other hand, if he has not an object before him which is fitted to elicit the affection, or if his mind is not in a state favorable to the exercise of the affection, his willing to have the affection will fail to produce it.

I have said that the act of the will does not directly govern the affections. To set this in the most striking point of view, I now add that the converse is true, namely, that *the affections govern the will*. I use affections in the large sense before mentioned, including the emotions, desires and all the feelings of the heart. It

* Sermon on "the Sinfulness and cure of thoughts."

† Elements of Mental and Moral Science, p. 75, 76, London Edit. 1828.

Digitized by Google

is evidently one of the laws of the mind, that the will, instead of exerting a direct control over the affections, does itself act under their influence. This is to me a fact of consciousness. I cannot recall a single instance in my past life, in which I put forth a volition, choice, or act of the will, except as prompted to it by some inclination, feeling or desire. If it were necessary I might prove this by the plainest representations of Scripture. I have already adverted to the doctrine repeatedly taught in the New Testament, that love to God and man is the fulfilling of the law, — which must imply that there is a fixed and sure connection between love and obedience, that obedience certainly flows from love; as Jesus said; "if any man love me, he will keep my word."

But this is a point, on which mankind from their own experience come generally to the same conclusion. And if any can be found who adopt a speculation at variance with this, their practical judgment contradicts their speculation. But I shall say more on this point in another place. It will however be to my purpose to show that the most respectable writers, how different soever their habits of thinking on other subjects, agree in this. Dr. Upham makes it plain that the intellect operates upon the will only by means of the emotions, feelings and desires. He gives the example of a man, who reasons himself into the belief that a certain amount of property would be beneficial to himself and family. But if this intellectual belief is not attended with some emotion or desire, it will fail to arouse the will to activity or to secure a single effort. Locke, in opposition to the opinion he had before entertained, says, "Upon a stricter inquiry I am forced to conclude that good, the greater good, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, does not determine the will, until our desire makes us uneasy in the want of it. Let a man be ever so well persuaded of the advantage of virtue, — yet till he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, till he feels an uneasiness in the want of it, his will — will not be determined to any action in pursuit of it. For good, though appearing and allowed ever so great, yet till it has raised desires in our minds, reaches not our wills."

The following remarks are from Sir James Mackintosh, a distin-

Digitized by Google

guished metaphysician and philosopher, who cannot be suspected of any fondness for theories unsupported by plain facts. His object is to show that what I have called affection, and that only, influences volition. He says, "through whatever reasoning the mind may pass in its advances towards action, there is placed at the end some principle wholly unlike mere reason, some emotion or sentiment which must be touched before the springs of will and action can be set in motion." Again, when he is speaking of a being, who may be supposed merely to think and reason, he asks, "what could induce such a being to will or to act? — Reason as reason, can never be a motive to action. It is only when we superadd to such a being sensibility or the capacity of emotion or sentiment, — of desire or aversion, that we introduce him into the world of action. We then clearly discern that when the conclusion of a process of reasoning presents to his mind an object of desire, or the means of obtaining it, a motive of action begins to operate, and reason may then, and not till then, have a powerful but indirect influence on conduct. Let any argument to dissuade a man from immorality be employed, and the issue of it will always appear to be an appeal to feeling. You prove that drunkenness will probably ruin health. But your hope of success depends on the drunkard's fear of ill health; and he may always silence your argument by telling you, that he loves wine more than he dreads sickness. You speak in vain of the infamy of an act to one who disregards the opinion of others. — You may truly but vainly tell of the pleasures of friendship to one who has little affection. If you display the delights of liberality to a miser, he may always shut your mouth by answering, the spendthrift may prefer such pleasure; I love money more." It is thus apparent, this writer says, that the influence of reason on the will is indirect, and arises only from its being one of the channels by which the objects of desire or aversion are brought near to these springs of voluntary action.

I have allowed myself to extend these remarks so far for the purpose of strong confirmation to the principle I have advanced. Strange as it may seem, it has been said by some that volition, or the act of the will, always controls the affections. I hold it to be

Digitized by Google

a matter of consciousness that this is not the case, but that the contrary of this is a uniform law of the mind, namely, that the will, instead of having any direct control of the affections, is itself controlled by them.

It is easy to see the wisdom and fitness of that constitution of our nature by which the influence of the will is thus limited. In the first place if a mere act of the will governed the affections, how could the uniformity of the affections and the stability of the character be secured, unless the will itself should be preserved from its natural capriciousness and be kept uniform and steady by another and a superior power.

Secondly. If our affections were influenced by a mere act of the will, what occasion could there be for that incessant watchfulness, and that earnest, painful and persevering labor, which the Scriptures require of us, in order that we may subdue what is evil, and form ourselves to holy love and obedience, on the principle supposed, if we should merely put forth a volition or an act of the will that our affections might be pure and heavenly, the work would at once be accomplished, and nothing more remain for us to do. How opposite would this be to the plan of divine wisdom, which in the business of our spiritual culture, assigns to us an amount of effort sufficient to occupy all our active powers through the whole period of our probation.

Thirdly. The extent of voluntary power which God has given us, is suited to encourage and stimulate us to the highest endeavors to form right habits of feeling and action, and is fully sufficient for this purpose; while the appointed limits of our voluntary power are adapted to teach us our dependence on God, and our constant need of his Spirit to assist us in our duty, and to work in us both to will and to do.

But while it is so evident from consciousness and experience that the will does not exert a direct control over the affections, there is still a sense, and a very obvious and important sense, in which the affections are really influenced by the will. And as this is a point of great consequence, I shall endeavor to show clearly what is the nature of that influence, and what place it has in the business of moral culture.

Digitized by Google

Now as the affections are excited by the presentation of fit objects; if the will has any influence to excite the affections, it must be by means of such objects. Here then we see at once what and how extensive an influence the will may exert. Just so far as any act of the will is concerned in bringing fit objects before the mind, it has a power, in this indirect way, that is, by means of these objects, to call forth the affections. This power, as to its reality and importance, may be illustrated by the power we have by means of our voluntary agency, in the culture of a field and the production of a crop. The corn does not grow in direct obedience to our will; but it grows under the influence of those physical laws which our voluntary agency directs. If we wish for a crop, we make use of means, which according to the known laws of nature will tend to produce a crop. Over the growth of the corn, our wishes and volitions have no immediate power; but they have a mediate or indirect power, that is, by the applications of means suited to the end in view. So in the moral world. The voluntary power which we have over our affections, is through the medium of those things, which are the proper excitements of affection, and which we can voluntarily direct. "A curious and important fact," says Dr. Whately, is forced on the attention of every one who reflects on the operations of his own mind, viz. that the feelings, propensities and sentiments of our nature are not, like the intellectual faculties, under the direct control of volition. The distinction is much the same as between the voluntary and the involuntary actions of different parts of the body. One may, by a deliberate act of the will, set himself to calculate, — to reason, — to recall historical facts, etc., just as he does to move one of his limbs. On the other hand, a volition to hope or fear, to love or to hate, to feel devotion or pity, and the like, is as ineffectual, as to will that the pulsations of the heart or the secretion of the liver should be altered. Some indeed are, I believe, (strange as it may seem) not aware of the total inefficacy of their own efforts of volition in such cases, that is, they mistake for a feeling of gratitude, compassion, etc., their conviction that the case is one which

Digitized by Google

calls for gratitude or compassion. A very modefate degree of attention however to what is passing in the mind will enable any one to perceive the difference. How is this difficulty to be surmounted? Good sense suggests in each case an analogous remedy. It is in vain to form a will to quicken the circulation of the blood, but we may by a voluntary act swallow a medicine, from which will follow that effect. And so also, though we cannot by a direct effort of volition excite or allay any sentiment or emotion, we may, by a voluntary act, fill the understanding with such thoughts as shall operate on the feelings. Thus by attentively studying and meditating on the history of some extraordinary personage, by contemplating and dwelling on his actions and sufferings, — his virtues and his wisdom, — and by calling on the imagination to present a vivid picture of all that is related, and referred to, in this manner we may at length succeed in kindling such feelings, suppose of reverence, admiration, gratitude, love, hope, emulation, etc., as we were already prepared to acknowledge were suitable to the case. So again, if a man of sense wishes to allay in himself any emotion, that of resentment for instance, though it is not under the direct control of the will, he deliberately sets himself to reflect on the softening circumstances, such as the provocations the other party may suppose himself to have received, perhaps his ignorance or weakness, or disordered state of health; — he endeavors to imagine himself in the place of the offending party, and above all, if he is a Christian, he meditates on the parable of the debtor who, after having been himself forgiven, claimed payment with rigid severity from his fellow servant, and on other similar lessons of Scripture. Such processes as this, to which a man of well regulated mind continually finds occasion to resort, is exactly analogous to that of taking a medicine which is to operate on the involuntary bodily organs."*

We see then how important and how extensive our voluntary agency is in regard to our affections. Experience teaches us

* Whately's Rhetoric.

Digitized by Google

what situation is most favorable to the exercise of holy affections, and what views of the mind, or what objects brought before the mind, have the greatest effect in exciting such affections. For example, experience teaches us that the house of God, the company of devout Christians, religious retirement, the chamber of sickness and the house of mourning are promotive of good affections and desires. If then we would cultivate such affections, we must put ourselves in these favorable situations, which is a matter of voluntary agency. In respect to these favorable situations we have a voluntary power over ourselves, and it is just as necessary we should use this power to bring ourselves into a right situation, as it is to set a plant in a place where the sun will shine upon it, and the rain and dew afford it moisture. Experience teaches that, if the mind is in any measure in a right state, reading the Scriptures, hearing the gospel preached, conversing with intelligent Christians, and other ways of bringing the truths of religion before the mind, tend directly to excite good affections. In order to excite such affections in ourselves, it is then just as proper and necessary that we should make use of these methods of bringing the truths of religion clearly before the mind, as that we should do anything to cultivate the vegetables in our garden. Here you see how extensive is the business to which we are to apply ourselves, as voluntary agents. Our minds ought always to be filled with holy affections. And that this may be the case, we should always keep ourselves in a proper situation, and should labor to have a constant succession of divine and heavenly objects passing before our minds, in the manner most suited to excite and strengthen holy affections. How immense appears the magnitude of this work, when we consider what a vast variety of truths must be brought to bear upon the mind, and how many and how diversified the forms in which they must be exhibited, to produce the greatest present effect on our moral affections, and to raise them permanently to their highest perfection. What manifest occasion then have we for the greatest diligence in the acquisition of knowledge, for skill in the arrangement of the various truths of religion, for watchful

Digitized by Google

care in keeping our minds, our senses and our external affairs in a right state, in short, for unceasing exertion to bring the most salutary and most elevating influence to act continually on our moral character.

But our voluntary agency in the business of moral culture goes farther. Experience teaches that while some objects and circumstances are suited to make right impressions on the mind, others are suited to have a contrary influence. It teaches what are the objects and occasions which tend to excite improper feelings. By a right use of our voluntary power, we can avoid such objects and occasions, and in this way prevent in a great measure, the excitement of improper affections. We learn from experience, that we cannot successfully resist the influence of powerful temptations to which we voluntarily expose ourselves. We learn that our thus exposing ourselves betrays either a total ignorance of our own hearts, or a willingness to give indulgence to our sinful passions. For those who are desirous of guarding against corrupt affection, and improving their moral character, here is a great work, a work inculcated as of the highest consequence in the word of God. It is the work of Christian vigilance, implying an unceasing care to avoid all the causes of irregular passion, and to keep ourselves at a distance from all occasions of sin, — an unceasing care and resolution to guard against those companies and places, the sight or contemplation of those objects, and the indulgence of those trains of thought, which are apt to kindle unholy affection, and so to pollute the mind. It appears then that although we cannot prevent or subdue sinful affection, as we regulate our bodily motions, by the direct influence of the will, still we may do much to prevent and subdue it by the influence of our will in respect to the causes or occasions of such affection. According to the view we have taken of the subject, the proper influence of the will or the extent of our voluntary power in regulating the affections is made perfectly obvious and definite, so that we know exactly what we can do, and what we have to do, by our voluntary exertions, in promoting our own moral improvement.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE L.

MORAL AGENCY. CONNECTION OF PRESENT AFFECTIONS WITH PRECEDING AFFECTIONS. PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE VIEWS WHICH HAVE BEEN ADVANCED RESPECTING THE CONNECTION OF THE AFFECTIONS WITH INTELLECT, WITH VOLITION, AND WITH PRECEDING AFFECTIONS.

We are now to inquire briefly *what connection our present affections have with any preceding affection, or what influence preceding affections have upon the present.*

It is generally the case that a previous affection is not particularly recollected, and of course cannot in any proper sense be called a motive to the mind, in the exercise of its present affections. But if an affection is recollected, and is thus brought as an object of contemplation before the mind, it must be considered as, in some sense, a motive, that is, it must, in connection with other things, exert an influence upon the feelings. Like every other object of contemplation, it must occasion or help to occasion some present emotion. But a recollected affection is generally only one of a great variety of things which operate as causes of our present affections. Those very affections therefore, which arise when we contemplate a past affection, must result more or less from other causes. And those other causes may modify and control the particular influence of the preceding affection, so that the feeling which the recollected affection produces may be exceedingly different from what it would be, were the recollected affection the only motive or cause acting on the mind. Of course we cannot generally predict that the affection, excited by

Digitized by Google

the recollection of a past affection, will be of the same nature with the past. An apostate angel may distinctly recollect the holy affection of which he was once the happy subject, while all his present affections will be totally unholy. In his present state of mind, the very remembrance of the holy affection he once had, will excite an affection of a contrary nature. And how often does a Christian, in a time of spiritual declension, recollect the happy feelings of days that are past, without having any similar feelings renewed by the recollection. And how often does a Christian, in a right state of mind, recollect his former corrupt affections with emotions of godly sorrow and holy abhorrence. Still in these very cases the recollection operates as a motive, and actually excites or helps to excite present affections. But the particular nature and degree of these affections depend on the influence, not of one single cause, but of all the causes which operate. It is owing to this combination of causes, that the recollection of a past affection is sometimes followed by an affection similar and sometimes dissimilar to the one recollected. Our recollection of a good affection sometimes excites a feeling of approbation and delight. But if the mind is in a state of settled impiety and rebellion, it will excite feelings of guilt and remorse, and so be a source of unhappiness. And when past goodness thus recollected is associated with painful emotions, it will produce greater and greater dislike of goodness; in other words, it will increase the strength of sinful affection. Such an effect as this, you will remember, does not result from the single cause of recollected goodness. All the corrupt dispositions now belonging to the mind, and various external objects, have an influence in producing the unhappy effect. Indeed the recollection of past goodness seems merely to give occasion to the activity of other causes.

What has now been said is sufficient to illustrate one way, in which past recollected affection has an influence upon present affection. But there is another way, and that of special consequence, in which this influence appears. There is what may properly be called *an aptitude of the mind to the exercise of par-*

Digitized by Google

ticular affections. That is, the mind is in such a state, that it is likely to have or is apt to have certain affections or emotions, rather than others, on the presentation of particular objects. I might illustrate this by many examples. Do you not know before hand how a covetous man and how a benevolent man will be likely to feel, when you ask them to give money to promote a benevolent object? And do you not know how an envious man will feel, when he thinks of the superior acquisitions or the superior honors of one of his companions? And do you not know how a man of a generous, disinterested heart will feel in view of the same superior acquisitions or honors of another? And do you not know what different emotions would arise in the mind of a devoted Christian and in the mind of a hardened sinner, in the mind of Gabriel and in the mind of Satan, if they should be brought into the presence of Jesus Christ? This aptitude to particular affections may be greater or less. It is greater, when the particular object excites the affection more readily or more frequently, or when the excited affection is stronger. This tendency to particular affections is indeed variously influenced by previous affections. But the natural, direct tendency of any affection taken by itself is to increase the mind's aptitude to the same affection. Thus the exercise of benevolence increases the tendency of the mind to benevolent affections. In consequence of loving God with all the heart now, our mind, supposing it exposed to no influence of an opposite nature, will be more apt to love him hereafter. The affection will be likely to arise more readily and to a higher degree. In this way we account for the high attainments which some Christians make in piety. The frequent exercise of love, faith and submission, strengthens the aptitude of their mind to the same exercise. It prepares the way for the same affections to be excited again more readily, or to a higher degree. Malevolent affections come under the same law. The exercise of anger, malice or revenge, taken by itself, naturally leads to a still more violent exercise of the same passions. It is well known that men grow more corrupt by indulging corrupt affections, — more wicked by wicked practice.

Digitized by Google

But this natural and direct tendency of the affections is frequently modified and sometimes changed by other causes. A particular affection may be attended by such circumstances, or connected with the influence of such other causes, that it will be followed by a diminished aptitude to that affection. Suppose a man has his compassion often and strongly excited by the appearance of distress in beggars, and by the touching appeals they make to his heart. And suppose he finds that this appearance is often deceptive, and that these touching appeals are often grounded on falsehood. The natural consequence is, a less aptness to have his compassion excited by the causes which excited it before. The exercise of compassion, if left to produce its own proper effect, would increase the mind's tendency to compassion. But in the case now supposed, the other causes which operate, that is, the discovery of imposture and the consequent painful reflections, go far to prevent the excitement of compassion when similar cases occur. And this counter-influence of incidental causes may be so great, as in a measure to deaden the heart to the exercises of pity in all other cases. On this principle you may easily see how the strong excitements of feeling, produced by fictions and by theatrical exhibitions, are adapted to produce a pernicious effect upon the natural sensibilities. The same remarks may be made respecting friendship and confidence. A man may in so many instances find his friendship misplaced, and his confidence betrayed, that in the end no excellence of character can gain his heart. The feeling of friendship and confidence tends by itself, to increase the mind's aptitude to the same feelings. But through the influence of other circumstances, that tendency may be diminished and ultimately destroyed.

Facts might be adduced, illustrative of the same principle in regard to sinful affections. Strong emotions of anger, if indulged and if separate from all other causes, would produce an increasing tendency to anger, and in the end a confirmed habit of indulging it in all its violence. But a man in certain states of mind may be so affected by the operation of other causes, that the violent excitement of his anger may in its results prove a

Digitized by Google

safeguard against such excitement in time to come. This effect you will observe is not to be attributed to the direct and proper operation of anger, but to other causes awakened and made effectual by the occurrence of anger. The same is sometimes true of other criminal affections. The dispositions, which David indulged in the case of Uriah, and Peter in the judgment hall, were undoubtedly followed by a state of mind more strongly fortified than ever before against the same criminal dispositions. And through the grace of God, it is so with Christians generally. The sinful affections which often rise in their hearts, and the sinful practices into which they are sometimes drawn, occasion the bitterness of sorrow, and that sorrow embitters the sin which occasioned it. On the other hand, the new evidence which Christians in such cases obtain of the immeasurable forbearance and goodness of God, increases the strength and tenderness of their love, and renders them more unwilling to offend. And even in the history of sinners, instances are not wanting, in which the commission of sin, especially of some flagrant sin, instead of producing, according to its own proper tendency, increasing sinfulness, becomes through divine mercy the occasion of such reflections and emotions, as actually lead to a change of character.

Here allow me to notice a mistake, sometimes made by the best of men, who represent it as a fact, that sinners while unrenewed universally grow more and more hardened and confirmed in sin, that they will certainly have less feeling on the subject of religion at a future time than they have now, and especially that those, who pass through a revival of religion without being converted to God, will become more stupid and bold in sin than ever before. This is undoubtedly a common fact. But it is well known that some sinners, not savingly converted in a time of revival, do nevertheless retain an increased sensibility to divine truth, a deeper feeling of the worth of the soul, a greater dread of sin, and a more awakened regard to the means of religion. They do not relapse into as great a degree of thoughtlessness and insensibility as they formerly had. Similar facts are found

Digitized by Google

to occur among sinners in other circumstances. But these facts are far from proving that there is not in every period of an impenitent state a constant augmentation of guilt, as there must be, if impenitence is a culpable thing; — nor do they prove that the natural tendency of living in impenitence and unbelief is not to produce a growing strength of sinful affection and a growing disregard to duty. They only prove that another and a higher cause is in operation, a cause which opposes and in some degree overcomes the natural and direct tendency of sinful affections. It is evident that in the actual state of their minds sinners would at all times be growing worse, would constantly acquire greater and greater hardness of heart, as truly as Pharaoh did, were they given over to the sole influence of their impiety. This will undoubtedly be the case with all sinners in a state of final retribution. In that state, the nature and tendency of sin will be fully displayed. But in the present life the tendency of sin to increase its own power in the mind, though generally and to an alarming degree manifest, is yet in a variety of instances subject to many powerful checks. Through the mercy of God other causes both inward and outward come in for a share of influence, and in a multitude of cases lead on to a moral state exceedingly different from that which would have resulted from the operation of sinful affection alone.

From this examination you will perceive what every advance in the knowledge of the mind will render more evident, that although we may discover very clearly that a particular law exists in our intelligent and moral nature, and produces many and important effects, yet such a law does not stand alone, but is in its influence combined with various other principles or causes, which sometimes increase, sometimes diminish, and sometimes entirely prevent its proper effect. It is this combination of moral and intellectual causes which renders the philosophy of the mind so complex, and the acquisition of clear and definite ideas of it so difficult.

But notwithstanding the difficulties attending this subject, we may to a great extent obtain a real knowledge of the laws which

Digitized by Google

regulate our mental operations and may apply that knowledge to the most important purposes.

The conclusion, to which this brief examination has conducted us in regard to the connection of our moral affections with intellect, with volition, and with previous affections, is obviously of great moment in the cultivation of moral virtue. Knowing the connection which *intellect* has with the affections, namely, that it apprehends the objects by which the affections are excited, we know precisely what is the use of intellect in the improvement of the affections. Intellect is not only important but absolutely essential. If without intellectual light, or which is the same thing without the use of reason, there could be any stirring of affection within us, it would be blind affection, hardly distinguishable from the instincts of the brutal species. But we are conscious of nothing like this. Our affections fix upon certain objects. That is, certain objects, apprehended by the understanding, move the affections. If then we would promote good affections, we must apply our understanding to the apprehension of moral objects. And we must apply it with such diligence, that the understanding itself may be continually improved, and in consequence of this may apprehend the objects of moral regard with more and more clearness and correctness, and with a larger and larger extent of views. In this way we may contribute to the excitement of stronger and more enduring affections. For if it is an apprehension of particular objects which excites the affections, then the clearer and stronger that apprehension is, the more powerfully will the affections be excited. When any object is seen partially or obscurely, the affection excited must be defective or weak. When we have mistaken views of an object, the affection excited must be a mistaken affection. Considering therefore the nature of the human mind and of the various objects which it is called to contemplate, and all the obscurity, defectiveness and error, to which our apprehensions of them are liable, we cannot but be impressed with the vast importance of improving our intellectual powers. To grow in knowledge is the means of growing in grace. Perfectly clear

Digitized by Google

and correct views of God and divine things in a future state will result in the perfection of holy love. We shall be like Christ, because we shall see him as he is.

The religion, which is founded on this principle and advanced by this means, is essentially different from every species of enthusiasm. Enthusiasts are influenced chiefly by imagination or feeling, in contradistinction to enlightened reason. And if reason is of any use with them, it influences them by erroneous apprehensions. The means then of preventing and curing enthusiasm is to give a right direction to the intellectual powers, and to promote just and Scriptural views of the objects of religion. Enthusiasm prevails most in a state of darkness, but is apt to die away under the influence of light.

I observe in the next place that our having a clear and definite knowledge of the connection existing between the *will* and the affections will enable us to make the most wise and successful use of our voluntary powers in the cultivation of goodness. The will we have seen has an influence over the affections, not directly, but through the medium of motives, that is, through the medium of those objects which reason apprehends. Having settled this point, we shall be forever saved from the folly of attempting to influence, and of supposing that we can influence, our affections directly by the power of the will, — as mere a dream as to suppose we can obtain the knowledge of geometry or influence the growth of a tree in the same way! Instead of thus wasting our time and labor in the misapplication of voluntary power, we know how to keep it within its proper province and direct it to its proper use. — Again, we shall no longer indulge the groundless opinion, that it is any part of moral agency or in any way necessary to moral obligation, that the affections should be directly under the control of the will. And when we find by experience that our volitions have not a direct power over the affections, that our previously willing to have or not to have a particular affection can neither insure nor prevent its existence, and that frequently our affections are contrary to what our will previously fixed upon, — when, I say, we find that our will has no direct power, and often no power at all either direct or indi-

Digitized by Google

rect over our affections, we shall regard it as no difficulty in the way of moral agency, and shall be far from supposing that we are on this account any less praise-worthy for right affections, or less blame-worthy for wrong affections. Now surely it must be no small advantage to be entirely freed from the perplexing, embarrassing notion, that a power which really has no existence is essential to moral agency. It must be no small advantage to be able to rest the doctrine of moral obligation on its one simple principle, and to separate it from every thing foreign to its nature.

Possessing just views of the connection which the will actually has with the affections, we shall in all our voluntary efforts have to do, not with imaginations and falsities, but with realities. We shall give the will the place which the Author of our nature has given it, and apply it to the important purposes to which it is truly adapted. We shall never treat the affections, as though they were made to submit blindly and slavishly to the despotism of the will. The power, which we shall attempt to exercise over them, will be a rational power, a power exercised by means of rational motives. In other words, we shall attempt to excite and improve the affections by bringing before the mind those objects or considerations by which the affections are and must be excited. This is the connection, which the will has with the reason or intellect, in eliciting or governing the affections. The will points reason to its proper objects. Of those objects, reason forms apprehensions; and by these apprehensions, the affections are influenced. In other words, we ourselves love, desire, hate, etc. in view of the objects which are placed before our minds. We see what is the proper work and province of the will as well as of the intellect. And surely this work, whether of the one or the other, is sufficiently extensive, important and difficult, without our attempting to add to it what is altogether incongruous.

I observe, finally, that a correct understanding of the connection between our *present* and *previous affections*, besides preserving us from useless imaginations and mischievous errors, will prove a powerful motive to us to guard against all corrupt affection, even the first and smallest movement of it in the heart, and most assiduously to

Digitized by Google

cherish every feeling that is pure and holy. If we consider that according to the constitution of our minds a good affection naturally leads on to other affections of the same nature, that a continued train of good affections is more likely to arise in the mind and to arise too in a higher degree in consequence of every good affection which takes place; we shall be far more deeply impressed with the value of such affection, than if we considered it as existing singly or alone. It will indeed appear of great value, considered by itself, but of vastly greater value, considered in its relation to subsequent affections. It must be regarded as a matter of immense weight, that a pious emotion which at any time rises in our hearts, has a natural tendency to perpetuate itself, a tendency to exert an influence, which instead of passing away with the moment, will extend into all future time, contributing to form a permanently pious character, and to secure a state of unceasing enjoyment. Seriously entertaining this view of the happy consequences, likely to flow from right affections, we should crave them as the choicest of blessings, should open our hearts wide to give them room, and continually look to God, the fountain of holiness, that he would cause every good affection to prevail in our hearts.

Equally salutary effects would result from our considering the constituted connection of sinful affection with the subsequent state of the mind. With what anxious care should we avoid every unholy emotion, if we seriously considered that it is a disease of the soul hard to be cured; that when it once takes place, it has such a hold of our moral nature as will be likely to ensure its continuance, and that every operation of this hateful distemper increases its strength and renders it more fatal. If we were waked up to just apprehensions of this subject, we should be strongly impressed with the evil of sin, not merely as consisting in a wrong state of mind and the attendant unhappiness at the particular time when it takes place, but as tending according to the laws of the mind to draw after it endless pollution and misery. Thus we should look upon every sinful affection that rises in the heart, as an evil of fearful magnitude, and as spread-

Digitized by Google

ing an ominous and pestilential influence over the whole of our existence. We should feel that no degree of vigilance or resolution against sin can be too great; and that it is better to forego any present pleasure and to endure any extremity of present suffering, and even to give up life itself as a sacrifice, than to take this deadly poison into our souls. With these views we should look with amazement as well as grief on the multitude of rational beings around us, who live not only without concern, but with apparent satisfaction, in the midst of the most dreadful plague that ever seized on man, and who are so stricken with madness, that they are often the more pleased, as they exhibit more certain symptoms of eternal death.

Thus we should find that the true system of mental philosophy teaches us to adopt conclusions which are perfectly coincident with the holiest dictates of revelation.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LI.

ON WHAT PRINCIPLE WE ORDINARILY PREDICT OUR OWN FUTURE AFFECTIONS AND THOSE OF OTHERS.

STILL further to elucidate and establish the general principles advanced in the two foregoing Lectures, I shall direct your attention to the well known fact, that *we can in many cases know what affections will arise in our own minds and in the minds of others in future time.* For example, we can predict that an affectionate father will love his children to-morrow and next year, and that a sincere Christian will continue to love his Saviour. Our daily transactions imply the power of predicting what feelings our fellow creatures will hereafter possess. This is implied in every instance, in which we repose confidence in our friends; for it is really a confidence in them, not only as they now are, but as they will be. And every instance, in which we pronounce others dishonest and wicked, or in which we suspect them of being so, implies an apprehension that they will feel and act dishonestly and wickedly hereafter. All that we say of men's dispositions or characters implies that we know, or think we know, what will be their feelings and actions in cases which may occur in future. If I tell you that such a man has a benevolent heart, or an upright and pious character, I mean to signify that he will undoubtedly have benevolent feelings or will act uprightly and piously the next minute and the next hour, unless indeed some unexpected cause shall intervene to change the state of his mind. And as to ourselves, the knowledge we have of our own principles, dispositions or characters implies that we can with more or

Digitized by Google

less certainty predict what will be our feelings and actions on future occasions. This power of looking into the future and knowing what affections will be excited, being so essential to the direction of our own affairs and to the order and happiness of society, deserves our particular attention. Let us then inquire in what way we acquire this knowledge and on what principles it is grounded.

My reasoning on this subject is limited to cases, where the causes concerned are known to us, and where they operate uniformly and produce their effects in the ordinary way. Cases of miraculous interposition are excepted.

In regard to those cases in which we are now concerned, it is evident that the knowledge we have of our own future affections and the future affections of others, is obtained in the same way as our knowledge of any other future events. In the natural world we know what will take place by knowing what has taken place. By planting corn in a good soil, prepared in a proper manner, with attentive cultivation and the usual degree of moisture and heat, we know that a crop will be produced, because we know that in this way a crop has been produced. The effect of food or medicine we can foretell, just so far as we have known its effects in similar cases before. If the same effect should not be produced hereafter as has taken place heretofore, we should ascribe the difference to the operation of different causes. We take it for granted, that the laws of nature are uniform, so that the same causes will produce the same effects. The reason why we so often anticipate events which do not come to pass, is that we have only a partial acquaintance with the combination of causes concerned, and from this want of perfect knowledge we are led to imagine causes to be the same, which are the same only in part. There is a real difference in the causes, though the difference may be concealed from us. Did we perceive the difference in the causes, we should anticipate a corresponding difference in the effect. In a particular place, there is a noble vine, which in past years was abundantly fruitful. But the present season, with cultivation and weather quite

Digitized by Google

as favorable, the vine withered away and died. To a superficial observer this difference of effects may seem unaccountable, inasmuch as all the causes, which he sees to have been in operation, continue to be the same. But a more careful examination reveals to him a cause of decay in the last case which did not exist before. The bark was violently torn from the vine, or the roots were devoured. There was a new cause, a cause which, had it existed in former years, would have produced the same effect. In other cases, the difference may be owing to the cessation of some cause which previously operated. A willow, which once flourished, now languishes. And yet the season is propitious, and trees in other situations are as flourishing as ever. We wonder at the fading of the tree and know not how to account for it. But soon we find that a secret spring of water, which formerly afforded perpetual moisture to its roots and caused its exuberant growth, has been dried up.

Such examples show that a perfect acquaintance with past causes and effects would enable us to judge as to the effects which will be produced in future time. If then we mistake, as we often do, in attempting to predict future events from the past, the mistake does not lie in our thinking that the laws of matter or of mind are uniform, or that the same causes will produce the same effects, but in our supposing that the causes which are to operate, will be the same as have operated in previous cases, when in fact they are different. In all cases, where causes apparently the same do not produce the same effect, it must be owing to some unperceived difference in the causes. To this difference we must attribute the difference in the effect.

It is in consequence of our not knowing or overlooking some of the causes which have influenced human feelings and actions in past time, or the causes which are to influence them in future, that we entertain so many mistaken expectations in regard to them. We are confident that certain motives will have a particular influence upon a man's feelings and actions. Why are we thus confident? Because we have observed in various instances that those causes have produced such an effect in other

Digitized by Google

men, and perhaps in him too. But we soon find ourselves disappointed. How can we account for the disappointment? Why did not the motives presented excite the same feelings or lead to the same actions as before? The answer is, that although the causes to a certain extent were the same, other causes very different were joined with them. Perhaps when motives were urged upon him in the last case, he was occupied with other objects and so was in a state of mind unfavorable to our wishes. Or perhaps from the influence of some hidden causes he was disinclined to give any attention to our persuasions; or some opposing inclination or passion, which had easily yielded before, had acquired such strength that no arguments of ours could overcome it. In a word, some causes which did not exist in the same degree of strength, interfered, and prevented the effects which our arguments had before produced.

Take another case. In a particular instance we are confident that no arguments whatever can persuade a man to abandon long continued intemperance, and we are thus confident because we know that all possible arguments have again and again been tried upon him in vain. But it may be that he has come to possess a different state of mind from what he had before. Some example of the dreadful effects of intemperance, or the experience of those effects in himself, may have alarmed him, or some affecting bereavement may have softened his feelings, or some divine truth attended with the influence of the Holy Spirit may have awakened his conscience. By some such cause, he may be prepared to receive a strong impression from those very considerations, which have been so often urged upon him without effect. Thus our confidence that no arguments could persuade him to forsake his intemperance, though the general principle it assumed was right, may still have been grounded on inadequate knowledge of the various things which conspire to produce the desired effect. Though our observation had indeed made us acquainted with many instances in which the best arguments could not induce him to give up intemperate drinking; still we should not have been so confident that he never would be induced to do it, had

Digitized by Google

we been fully aware of the different state of preparation into which his mind might be brought, or of the whole combination of circumstances which might operate as causes and might tend to persuade him to reform.

Here we see how it comes to pass that longer experience and more perfect acquaintance with human life generally check our confidence as to the future, and render us more cautious in predicting what events will take place. We find that a combination of causes quite different from our expectations, and beyond the reach of our foreknowledge, is from time to time brought to act upon ourselves and upon others. This we conclude will continue to be the case. And as it is in a greater or less degree beyond our power to foresee exactly the causes, which will come into operation, we learn, though perhaps reluctantly, that it is equally beyond our power to foresee what effects will be produced. And while some men, possessing great ardor and little knowledge of human affairs, feel themselves able to affirm with certainty how individuals and societies will act, and what events will take place, wisdom of greater maturity will lead us in most cases to hesitate and to doubt, and to wait in patience till divine providence shall give us further information.

We see then that our knowledge of what will be, arises from our knowledge of what has been, and that the power to foresee future events implies the uniformity of the laws of nature, or the certainty that like causes will produce like effects; and also that the fact of our having so imperfect an acquaintance with future events, arises from our imperfect acquaintance with the variety of causes which will come into operation in future time.

But in the present discussion, we are concerned particularly with the affections of the *mind*, and the actions flowing from them. My position is, that admitting as we must the uniformity of the laws of the mind, we are able to determine beforehand what affections will be excited in our own minds, just so far as we know what causes will operate upon us, and what affections have been excited by the same causes in past time. There are

Digitized by Google

indeed many difficulties in the way of our determining exactly what feelings we shall have at any future time, difficulties arising from our imperfect knowledge of the causes which have produced our past feelings, and those which will act upon us in future. But notwithstanding these difficulties, we have such a knowledge of our future affections, as proves highly beneficial to our most important interests. And every degree of this knowledge depends on past experience. We can no more determine what our feelings and actions will be under the influence of any future causes, except from our knowing what they have been under the influence of similar causes, than we can determine what will be the effect of any kind of medicine, or of any chemical cause, without knowing what has been its effect. An attempt to account for our foreknowledge or for the want of it on any other grounds, than what I have exhibited before you, must be wholly unsatisfactory.

The foregoing remarks relate to particular, specific affections. But there is a more general view of the subject which deserves to be noticed in this discussion, being of special consequence in theoretic and practical divinity. We divide all moral affections into two classes, holy and sinful. Each of these classes involves a great variety of particular affections, which may be arranged under several subordinate heads. Now while human nature remains in its present, disordered, unrenewed state, we can predict with certainty that whatever may be the particular species of moral affections arising in the mind of man, they will all belong to the general class of sinful affections. And this is the same as saying, that all the causes, except the regenerating influence of the Spirit, which can be supposed to act upon the mind of man in his natural state, will produce sinful affections of one kind or another.

For this conclusion, we have all past experience. If as Christians you review the history of your own minds in a state of unregeneracy, you will be convinced of the humiliating fact, that whatever causes operated on you, all your moral affections were wrong. No view which you could take of the glorious

Digitized by Google

goodness of God could excite your love. No display of the vileness and hatefulness of sin could produce any feelings of real abhorrence. No urgency of motives could persuade you to forsake sin and obey the Gospel of Christ. This was the only character you exhibited, while you remained without the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The acknowledgment of enlightened believers in every age respecting themselves confirms the same conclusion. But that which puts this point beyond any possible doubt, and which is by itself evidence sufficient to produce the most confident faith, is the testimony of God himself respecting the character of unrenewed man. On the ground of this threefold evidence, arising from the most faithful review of our own life, and from the full acknowledgment of Christians generally, and above all from the testimony of God respecting man's native character, we can certainly predict that sinners, while unrenewed, will continue to sin; that no motives can be presented before them which will excite holy affections; that whatever particular form their character may assume and whatever variety of changes it may undergo, it will not, without the renewing of the Holy Ghost, pass beyond the limits of moral evil. Of this we are confident, because such has been the universal fact respecting unregenerate man. This has been the case with unrenewed man so constantly, that we know his character in regard to religion, as well as we know his character in regard to his bodily appetites or his natural affections. And we can as certainly predict that man, so long as he continues without the regenerating influence of the Spirit, will continue to have moral affections which are unholy, as we can predict the operation of any of his appetites or natural affections.

It must I think be regarded as among the most obvious and certain principles of human knowledge, that in the ordinary course of nature the same causes produce the same effects, and of course that any difference in the effects must be owing to a corresponding difference, though frequently unperceived, in the causes. Now if a difference exists in the phenomena of the mind where the causes are apparently the same, instead of foreclosing all inquiry by the

Digitized by Google

idea of something mysterious and inscrutable, we should make it our object, by assiduous, persevering inquiry, to discover as far as may be, those hidden causes which will account satisfactorily for the difference in the phenomena.

To elucidate this subject still more fully, I present the following case. A man is tempted by his love of money to take away the life of a rich relative, who he knows has recently bequeathed him a large estate. But he instantly repels every thought that would lead him to perpetrate so atrocious a crime. And yet, not long after, he yields to the temptation and actually commits the deed of wickedness, which he before regarded with so much horror. The principal motive which finally prevailed, was the same as he before rejected, that is, the love of money and the desire of coming into the immediate possession of such an estate. Now it might be that precisely the same cause operated on his mind in the last case, as in the first, and yet produced a different and opposite effect. The business of philosophy is to account for this difference.

This difference unquestionably has a cause. In addition to the love of money and the thought of coming into the immediate possession of such an estate, so far as it was the same in the last case as before, there was something else of the nature of a cause, which, joining its influence with this, constituted a complex cause just as different from the cause which operated before, as its effect was different from the previous effect. But what was this additional cause? This question is doubtless capable of a satisfactory solution. In the first place, we must account for the murder, considered as a voluntary act, by the state of mind which directly led to it, and so was its proximate cause. Now that state of mind, considered as a whole, was clearly different from that previous state which prevented the criminal act. The whole history of the mind, if we were acquainted with it, would doubtless enable us to account for that different state of mind as satisfactorily, as we can account for any other mental phenomenon. For here, as in other cases, we could refer the effect to well known laws. And one of these laws is that a frequent and familiar contemplation of an agreeable object often tends to make it more important in our view,

Digitized by Google

and so to give it an increased influence upon us. An agreeable object frequently returning to the mind sometimes has an influence like the increased momentum of a falling stone. Accordingly, as the man above mentioned, contemplated the estate bequeathed to him, he was more and more impressed with the desirableness of speedily possessing it. Every new contemplation gave it new power over his feelings; which is perfectly like what we ourselves have often experienced, and is according to what we know to be the laws of the mind.

It also results from the constitution of our nature, that the familiar contemplation of the unnatural deed would diminish the horror with which it was once regarded, and that the resistance first made against the corrupt inclination would be gradually weakened. The very fact that the man suffered such a subject to return to his thoughts from day to day would suppress the power of his conscience and all the generous affections of his nature. By thinking perpetually, and with narrow, selfish emotions, of the property he was to receive, he would become more and more insensible to the feelings of gratitude and friendship towards his relative, and would finally look with impatience on that life which kept him from enjoying the object so dear to his heart.

We must consider also, that a man in such a case is liable to a strange infatuation, and that his mind is often so occupied and heated with the object of his passion, that he will overlook every other object, and even forget the common precautions which are necessary to his personal safety.

Thus, by referring to the well known laws of our intelligent and moral nature, we rid ourselves of whatever is ambiguous, unintelligible and obscure, and place the whole subject on the common ground of philosophical investigation. We refer the event under consideration to well known and uniform laws. And when we have done this, what more has philosophy to do?

I have fixed upon a particular fact for the purpose of profitable discussion. But the same principles hold in respect to all the common operations and states of mind. We are to look first at facts, facts intelligible and capable of distinct consideration.

Digitized by Google

We are next to ascertain the laws by which the mind is governed in respect to them, and to refer these facts to those laws. Here we come to the end of reasoning. Beyond this our knowledge cannot go.

It has been suggested, and it must be kept in view that the causes which operate in eliciting the affections of the mind, are often exceedingly complex. When we would account for a particular affection or act, we generally find it necessary to refer to a variety of principles combined. In many, perhaps in most cases, we must refer to a long series of preceding causes and effects. For it cannot be doubted that the present state of mind is affected by preceding states of mind, and is really the consequence of them, while those preceding states were affected by states still previous, and so on through the whole series. So that in order to find the true and complete cause of the present affection, or mental state, it would be necessary to look at the whole train of antecedent affections, as being in an important sense the complex cause. This you will perceive is a circumstance which must occasion great difficulty in our attempts to explain the phenomena of the mind. For it may be that the present state of our mind is to be traced back to some impression or excitement of feeling in our early childhood; that impression or excitement having contributed to the following state of mind, and that to another, and mingling from step to step, with other causes and conspiring with them to produce in the end the present mental state. Were we capable of reviewing and thoroughly investigating the whole history of our past exercises and of knowing perfectly all the laws of our minds, there would be little or nothing in our habits of feeling and action which could not be satisfactorily explained.

There are we know a great variety of affections, passions and appetites, naturally belonging to man. These are very different from each other, and in many cases the indulgence of one of them is inconsistent with the indulgence of others, and the increase of one implies the decrease of others. Now there are many causes in operation, which may lead to the indulgence and

Digitized by Google

the growth of one affection, and to the denial and decrease and apparently to the extinction of others; and this increase of some affections and decrease of others, or this different combination of affections is according to fixed laws; and these laws are sufficient to account for all the changes of character and conduct which take place in common life. For example, it sometimes occurs that a man, once devoted to idleness or sensuality, becomes diligent and sober. And sometimes a man of industry and sobriety becomes indolent or sensual. Now every man has those affections, passions or appetites which, under the influence of certain external circumstances, may produce in him the character of industry and sobriety, or of indolence and sensuality. When he exhibits either of these characters, we account for it by referring to the appropriate causes. And when he changes from one to another of these characters, we account for it by referring to a change of circumstances, in other words, to a change of the causes which operate upon him. It is indeed sometimes the case that a particular affection or habit is so confirmed, that none of the causes, which commonly operate, will produce a change. But in general the affections or habits of the mind are not confirmed to such a degree, and the door is open for changes. But whatever may be the particular character of a man in respect to the concerns of the present life, whether industry or sobriety or ambition or avarice or sensuality; it may be resolved into simple principles belonging to human nature. There are original appetites of body and affections of mind, which being combined and exercised in different ways are sufficient to account for all these forms of character. So that he, who has one of these forms of character, might, if other principles of his nature had been called into exercise, have assumed a different form. He, who is now fond of a retired, agricultural life, might have been trained to delight in the business of merchandise; and the merchant, who loves the business and bustle of a city, might have been trained to the quiet life of a farmer. The ingenious mechanic might have been a scholar, and the scholar a mechanic, the spendthrift a miser, and the miser a spendthrift.

Digitized by Google

The ordinary causes which operate upon men, and give them such a vast variety of character, have no power, properly speaking, to create any new principles. Their only influence is to develop the principles originally belonging to human nature, and to give them direction and form.

You will remember that cases of miraculous and supernatural interposition are here excepted.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LII.

MORAL NECESSITY, WHAT IT IMPLIES. CONSIDERATIONS IN ITS FAVOR.

THE subject of *Moral Necessity* furnishes a remarkable instance of the difficulty and perplexity occasioned by employing words in a scientific or technical sense, or in a sense not well defined or not well understood. If we say in plain language that a man is influenced to this or that action by particular motives, for example, if we say a Christian is influenced by love to Christ, or by the hope of future blessedness, to resist temptation and obey the divine commands; we express a truth which all understand, and which seems to be attended with no difficulty. And if we go farther and say, that every man who has love to Christ in his heart will certainly be influenced by it to resist temptation and obey the divine commands, we still speak a language which is intelligible to all. So, on the other hand, if we say, that every man, who is destitute of love to God and under the influence of unholy, selfish affections, will certainly disobey God and live to himself; we still use language which conveys an obvious and unexceptionable meaning. And if we rise to still stronger expressions, and say that there is nothing but holy love which can influence any man sincerely to worship and obey God, and that there is nothing but pride or love of sin which can influence any man to reject Christ and disobey his gospel; our meaning is readily perceived and no one finds any ground of objection. If we vary our expressions still further and, approximating a little towards scientific and philosophical language,

Digitized by Google

say, such is our nature or constitution, that love to God will and *must* influence us to worship and obey him, while pride or love of the world will and *must* prevent us from worshipping and obeying; still we are intelligible and none can hesitate to admit the truth of our declaration. We may say too, that love to God is a motive so powerful, that every one who is under its influence, will certainly obey the divine commands, and that while love to God has full possession of his heart, no consideration can prevent this. These and other similar forms of expression convey the truth intended in a manner perfectly plain and definite, and leave no room for misapprehension or mistake. But the moment we express this same truth in scientific or philosophical language, and say, that in all these cases the mind is under the influence of *moral necessity*, or that a man acts as he does *necessarily*, or that his actions are the *necessary* result of the causes which operate upon him; those who are not accustomed to such language or do not exactly apprehend its meaning, will be involved in difficulty. But it will be found on careful inquiry, that such difficulty does not arise, as is often supposed, from the nature of the subject, but from applying to it language which is commonly applied to different subjects and commonly understood in a different sense, or from bringing in false principles of reasoning, or finally from a state of mind, which admits of no clear conceptions on such a subject.

The doctrine of moral* necessity teaches as a matter of fact, that all the affections and voluntary actions of men result from the influence of causes acting in or upon the mind; that there is a certain, invariable connection between those causes and their effects; that the laws of the mind are fixed and uniform, and that in the mental world as well as in the material, the same causes always produce the same effects. This doctrine may be expressed differently thus: There is in fact an established, uniform

* For various reasons I prefer the word moral to philosophical. The latter term has a meaning too extensive, relating equally to all subjects whether material or spiritual.

Digitized by Google

connection of cause and effect in the moral world as well as in the physical, so that when all the previous circumstances are the same, the same results will certainly follow. The doctrine implies, that if we could know exactly and fully what moral causes will operate at any future time, we could foretell with certainty what the effects will be.

It is very necessary however, as has been already suggested, to guard agaist the supposition, that moral causes are entirely the same at one time as at another, because they appear the same. It may be impossible for us to know in any case all the moral causes which exist. Some of them, and those too which have the greatest efficiency, may in their nature and operation be too subtle to fall directly under our inspection. Our doctrine implies that the same effects will uniformly and certainly result, not from previous circumstances or causes which are *partly* the same, or which may *appear* to us to be the same, but from those which are the same really and entirely; and that this is as true in relation to the mind as in relation to the physical world. But while the connection of causes and effects in the mind is the same in respect to certainty and uniformity, as in the material world, it must be kept constantly in view, that both the causes and the effects are in their nature essentially different. In the one case, physical causes are connected with physical effects; in the other case moral causes with moral effects. This is the reason why the doctrine under consideration is denominated the doctrine of *moral* necessity, — the word moral being however used in a large sense. Here the effects result from the operation of a moral or mental cause, not a physical. The cause is correspondent with the effects. These effects are the internal and external actions of a moral agent. Physical causes cannot produce them. Although the things presented to our view in the material world, as for example, the light of the sun and the descent of rain may, as objects of contemplation, produce sensible effects in the mind, still they do not produce them as they produce vegetation by a physical influence. They do it by becoming the objects of the mind's apprehension, and so operating indirectly as moral causes,

Digitized by Google

or rather putting moral causes in operation. As far as effects are of a moral nature, they always flow from the mind of a moral agent and result from moral causes which exist and act in the mind.

In maintaining the doctrine of moral necessity, I adduce no abstract or conjectural arguments. The doctrine rests upon facts, — facts which constantly occur, and which every man may observe in himself. I might rather say the doctrine asserts a general fact. The question at issue is wholly a question of fact. Do men act under the influence of moral necessity? Or, in more plain and definite language, are the actions of men influenced by moral causes, and do those causes operate regularly according to an established, uniform law? The causes, with which we are now concerned, are those which operate in or upon the mind and produce intelligent action, and are commonly called motives. So that the question comes to this, whether men acting as moral agents are always influenced by motives, or act in view of motives, and in consequence of motives. But our reasoning on this subject will be constantly liable to mistake, unless we give to the word motives, as Edwards does, its most extensive signification, and make it comprise all the affections, dispositions, appetites and habits of the mind, everything in the mind as well as out of the mind, which excites or tends to excite inward or outward action. Objects presented to us from without are called motives, because as objects of contemplation they excite the affections. But when we speak of motives in the more strict and appropriate sense, as when we say a man's character and actions must be judged of according to his motives, we always refer to the dispositions, inclinations and purposes of the heart, or what are called subjective motives.

The proof of this doctrine is nothing but an appeal to those facts with which every man is familiar. This proof may be exhibited in several ways. In our common actions we are conscious of being influenced by motives. If we reflect on the ordinary actions of our life, especially those which present them-

Digitized by Google

selves to our consideration most clearly and distinctly, we shall certainly find this to be the case.

To assert that we are governed by motives is in fact no more than to assert that we are rational beings. If in any case we are not governed by motives, or act without motives, we do in that case cease to be rational or moral agents. It is indeed very common for us to act without this or that particular motive, and even to act against the influence of particular motives; but in all such cases we are influenced to act as we do by other motives of greater power. To say we are not, would be to say we are not rational.

Take another view. It is inconceivable that any action should be performed without a cause. If the action which is performed is rational and moral, it is inconceivable that it should take place without a reason or moral cause. It would be a self-contradiction, a palpable absurdity, to say that a rational action can take place without the accompanying circumstance, that it has a cause, that is, a motive or reason corresponding with its nature. A rational action performed without a reason would be a rational action that is not rational. And a rational agent, acting without a reason or motive, would be the same as a rational agent who is not rational. And this would be no less absurd, than to say that a stone is not hard and that water is not liquid. For hardness is no more the property of a stone or liquidness of water, than acting from some motive or for some reason is the property of a rational being. If any one thinks otherwise, I would let him alone till he finds out his mistake.

You implicitly acknowledge the truth of the doctrine under review, whenever you attempt to influence your fellow men to rational action. You present rational inducements or motives before them, and you do this for the sole purpose of producing some affection in them or engaging them to perform some action. Knowing as you do the nature of the mind, you never think of influencing men to act without the use of motives. This is the beginning and the end of all our efforts to induce a rational being to act. We present motives to a rational being when we

Digitized by Google

wish to excite him to action, just as naturally and spontaneously as we apply mechanical force in order to produce motion in a material substance; and we do this because we know it to be a law of the mind to perform rational and responsible action under the influence of motives and in no other way, as it is a law of matter which is at rest to remain so till it is put in motion by a physical force.

My last argument is, that God himself in his word constantly makes use of motives or rational considerations to induce men to right actions. This constitutes the whole system of influence, employed by the inspired writers and by the ministers of the gospel. And this implies that in the judgment of ministers and of God himself, man is so formed as to be influenced to act by motives, and in no other way.

The varied appeal to facts constitutes the evidence I offer to establish the doctrine of moral necessity, and to prove that men are governed and wholly governed by motives.

But you may be inclined to inquire more particularly, whether the influence of motives is uniform; whether our constitution is such that they operate upon us in the same manner.

In regard to this, it is clear that the same considerations which prove that men are governed by motives, prove also that the operation of motives is uniform; in other words, that the same moral causes will always produce the same effects. This position seems to me self-evident. And I know not how any man can believe it possible for a rational being not to act in the same manner, when all the previous circumstances and motives are the same. Let experience and common sense decide. Peter, under the influence of the motives which acted upon him the night before the crucifixion, denied his Lord. Now suppose he had been at any subsequent time precisely and in all respects in the same circumstances, and under the influence of the same motives; suppose the state of his own mind to have been the same; suppose him to have had the same weakness of faith, the same timidity and the same reluctance to suffer, and in all other respects the same dispositions and feelings, and suppose his external cir-

Digitized by Google

cumstances and all the motives which acted upon him to have been perfectly the same; would he not have willed and acted in the same manner? Do you say he might have willed and acted differently? Well then suppose he had acted differently. I inquire for the cause or reason of that difference. You must either assign some cause, and this would be the same as saying he had a different motive, or was influenced by a different cause, or you must say the difference of conduct had no cause, which would be the same as to assert that an effect may be produced without a cause, and this would be asserting what every man knows to be false.

It is manifestly the belief and the universal belief of men that the influence of motives, or the manner in which men are induced to act, is uniform. As evidence of this, it is sufficient to say that whenever we wish to excite men to a particular action, we always urge those very motives which have excited ourselves or others to the same actions. This is the course pursued by every one who would induce men to do their duty, and by every one who solicits them to commit sin. It is indeed true that only a part of the motives, which influence men to act, are under our direction or even within the reach of our knowledge, and that while the external considerations which lie within our power and which we carefully urge upon them are in substance the same as have been successful in other cases, the state of their minds, constituting the great, inward motive, may be widely different. And on this account, it would betray great want of discernment for us confidently to expect that the same consideration suggested to the minds of different men, or of the same men at different times, will produce the same effect. The difference in the disposition or state of mind, on which rational considerations operate, will always give to those considerations a different influence. But whenever we would induce men to act, we go as far as we can to bring them under the influence of the same motives as have induced others to act in the manner desired; and this plainly implies that we consider the mind to be so constituted as to invest motives, so far as they are the same,

Digitized by Google

with the same influence. Were it not for this permanent constitution of the mind, we could form no conception of the manner in which our fellow men will be affected by the circumstances attending them, or the motives which act upon them; and of course we could form no conception of their future conduct. Nor should we be able to form a definite conception in any instance whatever of our own future conduct. According to this strange notion, though a man has been influenced by his own governing disposition and by a variety of external motives to a life of unvarying industry and uprightness for a long course of years, this would furnish no ground of expectation that he will be thus influenced by the same motives at any future time. On this supposition, there would be no prospect of our gaining any sure influence over the minds of men, and the whole business of public or private speaking for the purpose of persuasion would come to an end. The exhibition of truth, the communication of thought, even language itself, would be of no value, and the bonds of domestic, civil and religious society would be dissovlvd. For the effect of all our attempts to produce conviction or to excite affection in the minds of others, and even the obligations of religion, depend on the permanence of the constitution which God has given to the human mind, and the uniformity of the laws by which it is governed.

You will ask whether we have not power to act differently from what we do. My reply is, that we have all the power which is necessary to constitute us rational and accountable creatures, and all which can belong to us as such. But we have no power to act contrary to the laws of our rational existence. In other words, we have no power to cease to be rational. We have power to act according to the laws of voluntary agency; but we have no power to act against those laws. That is, we have no power to cease to be voluntary. I may say too we have power to act according to the laws which govern us as dependent beings, but no power to act in opposition to these laws, that is, we have no power to cease to be dependent. Now the fact

Digitized by Google

that we have no power to act contrary to the laws of our rational, voluntary and dependent existence, does not leave us destitute of any desirable power, of any power which any man ever did possess, or which any man, except one who is distracted, or is guilty and wretched to desperation, can ever wish to possess. The power which I attribute to man is the power to act according to the laws which the Author of our being has established; in other words, it is the power to act as rational, moral, voluntary and dependent beings. This, I hold, is the only power we have. Ascertain what the above mentioned laws are, and you ascertain the limits of the power which we possess or can desire.

You may still inquire, whether we have not power to act differently from what we do. It is not my present intention to enter particularly on the consideration of the various difficulties respecting the subject of man's power or ability. All I shall do, will be to offer a few obvious remarks adapted for our present purpose.

To illustrate this point as clearly as possible, I shall take the following familiar case. For sufficient reasons a man now chooses to sit still. You say he has power to walk. This I admit. He has power to walk according to the laws of his nature, that is, he has power to walk when he wills it, or in obedience to his will. But has he power to walk without willing it? If you say he has, then I have three things to say in reply. The first is, that no man, acting as a rational, accountable being, ever did such a thing. So that the power supposed is one which never showed itself in any instance of rational, voluntary, accountable agency. There is then thus far no evidence from fact of the existence of such a power. Secondly. If you are not satisfied with the experience of past ages, then make the experiment yourself, and see whether you have the power of walking without willing it. Try as often and with as much effort as you please, so that you may be sure not to mistake. The result will be this. You will find that you have the very convenient, useful power to walk when you will, but that you have no power to walk without willing it. Third. The pow-

Digitized by Google

or supposed is very undesirable, and would be altogether useless and even hurtful, so that no rational man would wish to possess it.

But you say you have the power of *willing* to walk, and so the power of walking by willing it. This is also what I maintain. You have the power of willing to walk, that is, you have the power of willing this in accordance with the constitution of the mind, particularly the laws which govern the mind in regard to volition. You can will to walk when you have a sufficient motive or reason to do it, such motive or reason always being the antecedent circumstance or cause of the volition. The volition, whenever it takes place, is the consequence of a motive. If therefore you mean that you have the power of willing to walk, when you have a motive or reason operating in your mind sufficient to induce you to put forth such a volition, this I acknowledge is what all experience shows to be true. We find that we always will to walk when we have a sufficient motive or reason for willing this; which is the same as to say, we have power to exercise this volition as an effect of an appropriate and adequate cause. But if you assert that you can will to walk without the operation of such a cause, that is, without a sufficient motive, then I demand proof. If you have such a power, you can exercise it. To say you possess the power but cannot exercise it, is to say that you possess the power and yet do not possess it. Did you then on any occasion ever exercise such a power? Did you ever in any instance deliberately will to walk without any motive? You can recollect various instances in which you have willed to walk under the influence of motives, but did you ever will to walk without any motive or reason whatever? I am sure you never did, because I am sure that the influence of motives is involved in the very nature of volition; so that without this influence, volition would not be volition, any more than love would be love without anything to love, or than belief would be belief without anything to believe.

But if you are not satisfied with your past experience, then

Digitized by Google

make a new trial, as I proposed to you before; and see whether you can find the real existence of such a power as you have supposed. Before, you tried to walk without willing to walk. Now try to will it, without any reason for willing it.

Or make trial of your power in another way. I suppose it is true that you have no reason to go or to will to go to Mexico. This then may afford you a good opportunity to determine whether you have in fact the power to put forth a volition without any motive. And as an important question in mental philosophy is concerned, it is worth the while to make a deliberate and very serious experiment upon yourself, and for once at least to act out the power which you claim, *to will a thing without any motive.* And you need not fear that your willing to go to Mexico without any reason will involve you in any difficulty, as enlisting for military service would. For when you come to reflect that you willed without any reason, *except merely to show that you had power to do it*, why, you can for good and substantial reasons will to stay at home; and the thought of this may perhaps in the want of other motives help you to will to go; it may at least help you to put forth a kind of evasive will or double will, that is, a will to go covering up a will not to go, or a will not to go being somehow enclosed in a will to go. Try and see if you cannot prove your point, and without any reason will to go to Mexico, and yet after all not will to go. If you are not satisfied, take any other case you choose, and make the strange, preposterous effort to will something without any motive, inward or outward. You will, if I mistake not, come in the end to the conclusion, that the very important power which you possess to put forth acts of will no more implies that you can will without the influence of a motive, than your having power to see the moon implies that you can see it without using your eyes, or that you can see it without seeing it.

Evidently the power of willing which we possess, is no other than the power of exercising a volition under the in-

Digitized by Google

fluence of proper and sufficient motives, or the power of exercising a volition for which we have sufficient reasons. And experience shows that we have no such power as can free the will from the control of motives, or can excite it to any volitions, otherwise than as it is determined by motives. In other words, all experience shows, that we have no power to deprive ourselves of the properties of rational beings.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF MOTIVES, OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE.

It has already been suggested that the word motives is used in a two-fold sense, denoting both the objects which are presented to the mind from without, and the dispositions and desires of the mind itself. Accordingly *motives* are called *objective* and *subjective*. Both of these classes of motives exert an influence upon us, but not in the same way. Objective motives, or things presented to the mind from without, have an influence upon us through what is inward, that is, by means of the dispositions and desires of the mind. We learn from our own consciousness and from observation, that external objects affect us according to our internal state. Their power to influence our conduct depends altogether upon what is within the mind. They become real motives only by coming into contact with what we call subjective motives. Hence it may be said in reference to external or objective motives, that we ourselves determine their influence, that is to say, we determine it by our inward state. One man, by the covetous or ambitious disposition which he has cherished and strengthened, gives to wealth and power, objects external to the mind, a powerful influence over him, an influence which controls his volitions and conduct. While another man, who is benevolent and spiritually minded, guards himself against the improper influence of those objects, and it may be said that, by his holy frame of mind, he determines or makes it certain that wealth and honor, as objects of covetousness and ambition, shall have no power over his will or his life; that they shall have no in-

Digitized by Google

fluence, except in subserviency to his benevolence. It was Judas's inward state which gave all their effect to the low, base motives which prompted him to betray Christ, — motives which could have exerted no such influence upon the pure mind of John. It was the state of Christ's mind, which prevented any temptation from obtaining the least power over him. It is a fact well known to all careful observers of the human mind, that our internal state, our affections, our dispositions, our mental habits, our appetites, passions and desires, determine what influence external motives shall have upon us. While we are in one state of mind, those motives have a bad influence upon our voluntary conduct, an influence to lead us to acts of disobedience. If we are in another state of mind, the same external motives have a good influence upon us, or no influence at all. This is the way, and the only way, in which the influence of this class of motives is determined. Worldly and forbidden objects will never cease to be pleasing and attractive, and spiritual, holy objects will never cease to be displeasing and repulsive to a man, while he is in an earthly, unholy state of mind. But the reverse of all this takes place in one who is spiritual and holy.

The truth of what I have now advanced, as to the influence of external or objective motives, is so fully impressed upon us by our own experience, that we always proceed on the belief of it when we present motives to the minds of others. We are persuaded beforehand, that if the objects of Christian benevolence are presented to a man whose heart is contracted and selfish, they will fail of producing the effect which we desire, and which they actually produce in those whose hearts are enlarged with benevolent and pious affections. But if we are not satisfied with what general observation teaches, then let us make an experiment upon ourselves, and see whether the influence of external motives is determined in any other way than by means of some predominant disposition or desire in our own mind. And I am confident that a fair experiment will satisfy us that the influence of this class of motives depends wholly on our internal state; that a particular motive, for example, the command of God, will in-

Digitized by Google

fluence us in one way when we are in one state of mind, and in a different way when we are in a different state; and that this is the only way in which any external motives have power over us.

This principle, which is of great consequence in the philosophy of the mind, has been frequently illustrated by a fact of common occurrence in relation to our bodily constitution. Present the most delicious food to a man who is sick. Instead of exciting desire, as it does in the healthy, it excites disgust. While he is sick, food cannot be agreeable to his palate. In order that wholesome food may have the desired influence upon him, he must be restored to health. It is equally true that while a man is under the dominion of selfishness, the motives of religion will never have the influence over his mind, which they have over the minds of Christians. Before they can have that influence, he must possess a benevolent, pious disposition. To suppose that external motives can exert an influence over us, contrary to the affections and desires of our hearts, is absurd. And to suppose such a power to be actually exercised, — to suppose, for example, that the holy character of God can actually excite enmity in the hearts of angels while continuing holy, or love in the heart of Satan, or in the heart of any man remaining unregenerate, would be to suppose what would subvert the foundation of moral character and the principles of human knowledge; indeed it would be to suppose a gross absurdity. But it may be said, that men without any real change in their moral state do greatly vary the influence of those objects, which are presented as motives to action. This is admitted. But it is very easy to show, that such an alteration in a man's voluntary conduct is the consequence of a change of some sort in the state of his mind. There are other dispositions, besides those of a religious character, which have an influence upon the conduct of men. A man who once neglected the public worship of God may, so far as religion is concerned, continue as he was, and yet to promote his credit or interest or some other object to which he is attached, he may become a stated attendant on public worship. But this is only saying, that a man may give

Digitized by Google

to a particular object, such as public worship, a new influence over his mind by viewing it in a new light, or bringing it to have a new bearing upon some of his natural inclinations. As a means of spiritual good, the object is still regarded with indifference. But it is now viewed as a means of promoting some worldly or selfish interest, and thus it becomes a powerful motive to action. Here, as in all other cases, the object derives its influence over a man's conduct from some prevailing disposition of his heart. For were he not attached to that worldly object which is contemplated, it would have no power over his will or his conduct. A consideration of all the variety of cases which occur, would confirm our conclusion, that we cannot regulate the influence of external motives, nor do anything to give them more or less power over us, except by means of our dispositions or the states of our mind. But these dispositions and states are so various, and relate to so many objects, and in their operations are capable of being combined in so many ways, that there is no end to the variety of results which may flow from them. All the appetites and passions, all the natural affections, all the dispositions of the heart in relation to God and man, and to the interests of time and eternity, may have an influence in determining what effect any external motive shall have over our mind and our conduct; or to express it otherwise, in determining how we shall feel and act in view of that motive. The influence of the outward motive must in many cases be exceedingly complex, flowing as it does from such a variety of inward dispositions. Accordingly the power which we have in determining the influence of an outward motive over us, is often so complex that it cannot without difficulty be analyzed.

We now proceed to consider those motives which are called *subjective*, consisting in those very affections, dispositions and desires of the mind, on which the influence of outward things depends.

It is manifest that our affections and desires constitute our character. In a moral point of view, my love is myself. I am praise-worthy or blame-worthy, holy or sinful, according to my

Digitized by Google

love. If I love God supremely, I am holy. If I love myself or any created object supremely, I am sinful. In other words, if I am a lover of what is good, *I* am good. If I am a lover of what is evil, *I* am evil. My life, my voluntary conduct, will be according to my love. Hence love to God is virtually the fulfilling of the law. And the want of this, and the contrary love, is the sum of disobedience; it involves all evil. It is therefore with obvious propriety, that we consider the supreme affection of the heart to be the great, governing motive within us. But when we speak of this great, subjective motive, as comprehending all the springs of action, we mean to comprise under it the appetites, inclinations, passions and desires, in short, all the inward principles and movements of which we are conscious, and which constitute the inner man and make us what we are.

Now for the sake of brevity, I give to all these inclinations, this love and its opposite, these inward desires and principles of action, the general name of affections, or the predominant state of the heart. And my present inquiry is, whether we may and do in any way exert an influence over this inward motive, so as to make it in any respect different from what it was before.

And here it is perfectly evident that, according to the well known laws of the mind, we may greatly modify all our affections. By our own agency we may increase or diminish their strength. We may give superiority to a particular affection which has been inferior. We may bring into subjection one which has governed us. And we may bring about a different combination of these internal principles. In consequence of this modifying influence over our affections, we may greatly vary their power as motives of action. The love of money or of honor may come to possess more or less control over us than formerly. If we are Christians, our love to God may rise higher or sink lower. And every affection of the unrenewed heart may grow in strength, or may lose the degree of strength which it once had.

But the influence which we exert over our affections, which are the subjective and primary motives of action, is not, as I have already shown, the direct influence of our volitions, but comes chief-

Digitized by Google

ly in these three ways; first, by means of the views we entertain of the objects of our affections; secondly, by means of the circumstances in which we are placed; thirdly, by means of our past states of mind.

It is certain that our views of the objects before us must have an effect upon our dispositions, either to excite, and strengthen them, or to detract from their strength. It is equally certain that our present dispositions are greatly affected by our previous state of mind; and it is no less certain that our dispositions are influenced by the events which take place around us and by the various circumstances in which we are placed. It is by these causes that our original dispositions are brought into so many different combinations, and form so many complex dispositions or states of mind. Now if the things above mentioned are in fact the causes which operate upon our dispositions, and have such an effect to excite, modify and control them, we shall easily determine what kind of power we have respecting them, and how that power is exercised. First; it consists partly in the power we have to regulate our own contemplations and views. This power, which is to be learnt by experience and observation, is doubtless much greater than is commonly supposed. It is a well known fact, that some men by patient efforts acquire an ability to regulate their views and trains of thought in a manner quite above what others would consider practicable.

Secondly; the power we have over our dispositions consists partly in the power we have over the events and circumstances around us. This power we know to be of great importance. To influence our circumstances and the course of events appertaining to us, is the object of a great part of the agency we exert.

Thirdly; the influence we exercise over our dispositions at any particular time consists in part in the previous dispositions we have exercised, and is in a measure dependent upon them.

From the view we have taken of the subject it clearly follows, that the power we have over our present dispositions is indirect and limited. It is indirect, as we are able to influence our dispositions in no other way than by means of our views, our circumstances, and our previous states of mind. It is limited, as the

Digitized by Google

various causes which affect our present dispositions are in a greater or less degree beyond our control. There are many things, such as the agency of our fellow creatures, and the course of divine providence, which have an influence not subject to our direction over our views and trains of thought, and over the events and circumstances which most nearly concern us. And as to the previous states of mind, they were at the time more or less under the influence of causes direct from our voluntary agency, and we are now wholly unable to alter what has actually taken place. Such in brief are the limitations of our power over our present dispositions. In some instances we voluntarily exert a decided influence over those things which operate as causes upon our dispositions. In other instances our voluntary agency has little or nothing to do with those causes.

We have proceeded far enough in this investigation to see, that whether the motives we speak of are the objects presented to us from without, or the dispositions of our own minds, we can exercise no power over them, except in accordance with the established laws of the mind. In this affair we can accomplish nothing independently of the settled constitution of our intelligent and moral nature. The laws of mind are indeed more subtile and complex, and the effects resulting from them are less visible, than what belong to the physical world; but they are no less regular and certain. It is the knowledge of these mental laws, that lays the foundation of all practical wisdom. It is this, that gives us ability to exert a salutary influence over our fellow creatures, and to manage skilfully those concerns in which we are connected with them. The power we possess is evidently of such a nature and extent, as the purposes of our present existence require, and at the same time it is under such limitations as are necessary to guard against irregularity, and to secure the general order of an intelligent, moral kingdom.

The doctrine of moral necessity, which I have endeavored to explain and defend, is this, that all the volitions and actions of men result from the operation of causes, and that between these causes, which are commonly called motives, and their effects,

Digitized by Google

which are the mental and bodily actions of men, there is a certain and invariable connection, — a connection as certain and invariable, as between physical causes and effects. A question arose whether we have not power to vary this connection, and even to set it aside; or, which is the same thing, whether we have not power to act differently from what we are influenced to by motives. Now if the power we possess is such, and such only, as I have represented it to be; if all its exercises, however diversified and complex, come under the influence of what we have called moral causes, and if they are just what those causes by their own proper operation produce, then the exercise of such power as we have, is so far from being inconsistent with the doctrine of necessity, that it is itself a plain instance of it. It is to be particularly observed, that whatever we do to regulate any of our motives, whether external or internal, in that very thing we are still influenced by some motive. If we endeavor by one means or another to check or increase the influence which a particular outward object or a particular disposition of the mind is likely to have over us, we certainly endeavor to do this for some reason, or because we are led to it by some motive. Should we exert or endeavor to exert power without having any motive for it, we should put off or endeavor to put off the character of rationality. Thus all our actions external and internal fall under the influence of motives, and as certainly flow from them as effects in any other case flow from their proper causes.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LIV.

DO MOTIVES INFLUENCE MEN NECESSARILY? SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATION. NATURE OF THIS NECESSITY. OBJECTION FROM A CASE OF INDIFFERENCE CONSIDERED.

But do motives, which are the moral causes of whatever we do, act upon us and produce their effects necessarily? The answer must depend upon the meaning of the word. If necessity is used in the natural or physical sense, implying what is commonly called coercion or force, if it means anything whatever which supersedes the perfect use of our rational and moral powers, then there is no necessity in the influence of motives. In other words, it is not by a physical necessity that motives act upon us. Why then, it may be asked, do we make use of a word which in its original and proper sense is inapplicable to the subject? I answer, for the same reason that we use metaphorical, technical, or scientific language in any other case. There is such a resemblance between necessity in its natural sense and the influence of motives, that the use of the word to express this influence becomes convenient and suitable. The point of resemblance is clear and obvious. As physical effects result uniformly and certainly from their appropriate physical causes; so moral effects, that is bodily and mental actions, result with equal uniformity and certainty from their appropriate moral causes. As the constitution of the natural and moral world is, such effects will and must result from such causes. This established and certain influence of causes to produce effects is what we mean by necessity. In the natural world it is natural necessity, in the

Digitized by Google

moral world, moral necessity. Considering that moral causes operate so certainly, never failing to produce their effects, we are naturally led to speak of these effects as taking place necessarily and to say they must be so, they cannot be otherwise, it is impossible they should not take place. Expressions of this kind and with this meaning are common in all languages. They are found particularly in the Bible. Christ and the apostles used such expressions with perfect familiarity. Christ told his disciples that he *must* go to Jerusalem and die there. He said on the supposition of his avoiding death, "how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it *must* be?" "When ye hear of wars, etc., be not troubled, for such things *must* be." "The things which are written of me *must* be accomplished," "Jesus *must* needs go through Samaria." "There *must* be heresies among you." "Offences *must* come." In all these cases, the necessity referred to consisted in the influence of moral causes, such as the wise purpose and Providence of God, the dispositions of men and the circumstances of the world. Take the declaration of Christ respecting offences. "Wo to the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh." "It must needs be." The original, Matt. 18: 7, is stronger. *Ἀνάγκη γάρ ἐστιν ἐλθεῖν τὰ σκάνδαλα.* There is a *necessity* that offences should come. Luke 17: 1, "It is impossible but that offences will come." But see what this necessity is, namely, the perverse dispositions of men. These will produce offences just as a bad tree will produce bad fruit. The inspired writers express this kind of necessity with the greatest freedom and in the most emphatic language, and seem never to have the least apprehension that there can be any mistake. Nor does any man now apprehend any mistake from the use of such language in common conversation. We say of a man, that while he has such wicked passions he will certainly, and necessarily commit sin — that he cannot do otherwise than sin. So Jesus said; "How can ye being evil speak good things?" And he illustrated the impossibility by the impossibility of a bad tree bearing good fruit. And we say of Paul,

Digitized by Google

as he said of himself, that a necessity was laid upon him to preach the gospel, implying that he had such love to Christ and to the souls of men, and such a strong feeling of obligation, that he could not do otherwise than preach. He says too of the carnal mind,—"it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Such must be the result of such a state of mind. It cannot be otherwise.

Thus the language of Scripture and common discourse agrees with the language of philosophy in showing, that motives act upon us uniformly, and that our determinations and actions certainly follow as effects from the moral causes which operate upon us. The causes remaining entirely the same, the effects must follow. This is what is meant by moral necessity, or the necessity with which motives act upon us.

As an objection to the doctrine which I have endeavored to defend, it has been urged by some writers, and it is the argument on which they chiefly rely, that we sometimes act voluntarily in a case of indifference, that is, that we will or determine to do a thing, without any motive to do that rather than something else. For example, we take one of two oranges which are equally distant from us, and which appear perfectly alike, so that it must be a matter of perfect indifference to us whether we take one or the other.

In regard to such a state of indifference, and the argument which has been made to depend on it, I shall make a few remarks.

1. In a general view it is as obvious in this case as in any other, that we neither act, nor determine to act without a motive. Any man who takes an orange to eat, though the orange is ever so like to others, has a motivo to do it, either an appetite for the orange, or a wish to gratify his friends, or something else which prompts him to the action, and which he may properly assign as a reason for it. And as his choice in this case, and the action which follows it, even if it is an exercise of a self-determining power, takes place under the influence of a motive, the case affords a very slender argument truly against the doctrine, that our

Digitized by Google

volitions are determined by motives. For as to the act of taking an orange, the man is not indifferent. Whatever indifference he may feel as to other points, he feels none as to this. He has a motive, whatever that motive may be, which influences him to the act of taking an orange. This act follows as an effect from a cause, as much so as if there were but one orange set before him. And it ought to be remembered, that the comparison of the one taken with the one left may not be a subject of the least consideration, it may not come before the mind, and so the act of the mind may have nó reference to it. It may be no more a matter of comparison and choice, than if he should take the orange with his eyes shut.

2. But, even if the mind makes a comparison and acts with reference to it, it is not so clear as some have imagined, that we make the particular choice without a motive. If we are conscious of preferring this to the other, it implies that, if we act rationally, there is some reason for such preference. And if so, this reason for preference is the motive. Even if we perceive in the things themselves no ground of preference, there may still be something in our habits of mind which leads us to prefer one to the other. Some slight incident, or some turn of thought, or some remark from others, may have led us, without any particular reflection, to form a habit of preferring in such a case that which lies on the right or that which lies on the left. This may have become a circumstance of real consequence to our feelings, and may have an influence, though perhaps not apparent to us at the time, to determine us to the particular choice we make. If such is the fact, we cannot fully analyze the action without recurring to the motive, whatever it may have been, which first led us to form such a habit of mind; for we must consider the present action, flowing as it does from such a habit, as only one of a series of similar actions resulting from the same original cause.

And even if it should be a fact that we are totally unable to trace the act of taking one orange and not the other to any particular motive accounting for the preference, still this would not prove that there was no such motive. The movements of the

Digitized by Google

mind are in many cases so rapid, so subtile and so evanescent, that it becomes impossible for any skill of ours to analyze or explain them. Some of the circumstances of the action, making at the time but a slight impression, may have vanished from the mind's view, and we may never, by any power of memory which we possess, be able to recall them. This is the case we know with a multitude of our common actions, actions too, vastly more important than such an one as we are now considering, where the mind *appears* to be in a state of indifference. But who will say that all the common actions referred to were performed without the influence of motives, merely because no motives can be definitely recalled? In every such case, it is perfectly reasonable to consider our actions as taking place in the usual manner, that is, under the influence of motives, however unable we may be distinctly to recollect what the motives were, or how they produced their effect, or why this motive prevailed rather than another. You may illustrate this by such a case as the following. Put into a pair of scales, as equally balanced as possible, two weights which as far as you can perceive are perfectly alike. But one end of the scales rises and the other falls. You can perceive no cause for this, as the scales appeared to be equally balanced and the weights perfectly alike. But who would say that the common laws of the physical world are violated, and that the motion of the scales takes place without any cause? The judgment of all men would be, that there is a cause, however imperceptible. The same must be our conclusion in regard to the instance of volition now referred to. Although we may not have a memory sufficiently retentive, or a discernment sufficiently nice, to discover the particular motive which operated on our mind and influenced the particular choice we made; still we have no reason to think that the common laws of the mind were infringed, and that a determination took place without a cause. How much more reasonable it is to conclude, that there is some want of recollection or discernment in us, and that the act of the mind is really to be accounted for on the common principles of our rational nature.

Digitized by Google

8. But it is altogether unphilosophical to found a theory upon facts which are at best obscure and doubtful, facts which rarely occur and which are of no real consequence, in opposition to those facts, which are common, and perfectly plain, and of the highest moment. In all the important actions of life, in which there is deliberation and choice in the proper sense, we are altogether under the influence of motives, an influence which we can easily recall and plainly describe. These deliberate actions, which are always the result of an object distinctly contemplated, and acting upon some of our affections, constitute the substance of life and of character. We never look for anything of importance to character or to happiness in those actions, if there be any such, which result somehow from a state of indifference. In any determinations or actions which may be supposed to take place in this manner, there is no exercise of judgment. And there is no deliberation; for we deliberate for the purpose of comparing different motives and satisfying ourselves which is of the greatest consequence. Nor is there any moral agency, for this implies that we exercise our rational and moral powers, and are governed by rational and moral considerations, and that our volitions flow from the dispositions and desires of our hearts. I say therefore that if there are any such voluntary actions as are contended for by those who oppose our doctrine, actions which men perform without being influenced by motives, they must be considered as insignificant starts or unmeaning accidents, and must be wholly set aside in our reasoning on moral agency, just as we set aside dreams, spasmodic motions, and the actions of the insane, when we reason about the principles of rational, accountable agency; and our theory, if we would be philosophers, must be made to rest on those facts which are undoubted, and important, and which may be fairly examined and satisfactorily explained.

The most powerful objection which has ever been offered against the doctrine of moral necessity is, that it is inconsistent with moral agency; in other words, that if man is under the influence of moral necessity, he cannot be a moral, accountable

Digitized by Google

agent. I assert, that a man cannot be moral and accountable, unless he is under this very influence, and acts in this very way. But we will examine the objection.

To satisfy ourselves whether any two things are inconsistent with each other, we must have a clear and distinct conception of what those two things are. *What then is it to be a free, moral and accountable agent? And what is moral necessity?* As we have already attended to these questions, we shall merely glance at them here.

I shall make my appeal then directly to your moral sense, which, as has often been remarked, must be the ultimate test of truth on all such subjects. The doctrine of moral necessity is, that we always act under the influence of motives, that our actions flow as consequences from motives, and that it is impossible for us to perform voluntary actions except as we are influenced by motives, — including in this word all those dispositions of the mind and those outward objects, which are in their nature adapted to exert an influence upon us. Now I put the question to common sense. Let it answer. Is it inconsistent with moral, accountable agency that we should be influenced by motives? First, take motives to mean considerations from without. Is it inconsistent with our being moral and accountable agents, that the riches, honors and pleasures of the world should influence our conduct? Is it indeed true, that the man whose actions are prompted by these worldly objects ceases to be a moral agent and of course ceases to be blame-worthy? Is it true, that a judge, who is influenced by a bribe to pervert judgment and to injure the widow and the fatherless, is not a moral agent and not subject to blame? If it is so, then just note the reason why he is not a moral agent and why he cannot be subject to blame. It is because bad motives influence him, because he is governed by a bribe, — the very reason why Scripture condemns him, and the very reason why conscience condemns him.

But secondly; by the word motive the dispositions of the heart are often intended. In this view the question is, whether it is

Digitized by Google

inconsistent with a man's moral agency that he is influenced in his conduct by his own dispositions and feelings? Now did you ever imagine such a thing as that Christians are not moral agents, and so not praise-worthy for their obedience, because they are influenced to it by love to God? Or that wicked men are not moral agents and so not blame-worthy, because in their crimes they are influenced by selfishness, pride or malice? Every man knows, and if he is honest will say, that our being influenced to do right or wrong by the dispositions of our hearts is the very thing which makes us moral agents and renders us deserving of praise or blame for our actions, and consequently that these two things are so far from being incompatible with each other, that they cannot exist apart.

But we must pursue the objection a little further. Some, who readily admit that motives have a real and important influence on our volitions and actions, may think that moral agency would be destroyed by their having a *complete* influence, an *entire* control over us.

Here keep in mind that the influence of motives, be that influence ever so great and absolute, is totally different from physical force or compulsion. Keep in mind too, that there is nothing in the influence of motives which precludes or pretends to preclude the deliberate use of our rational faculties, or the perfect use of our will. The motives which act upon the mind of a reasonable man, directly lead him to deliberate, to use all his rational faculties, and most freely to exercise his will.

Come then to the question. Is it incompatible with moral agency, that motives should have a complete influence over us and should perfectly control all our actions? The subject of inquiry here is the high degree of influence which motives are said to exert.

It is granted that *some* influence of motives is consistent with moral agency. I ask then what there is which interferes with moral agency in a *high degree* of that influence, more than in a low degree? I appeal again to common sense and conscience.

Digitized by Google

Is it inconsistent with a man's moral agency that he should be influenced in his actions wholly by love to God?—that this holy affection should have a perfect control over him? If so, then it is inconsistent with moral agency for a man to obey the divine law, which requires him to love God with all the heart and soul and mind and strength. For where this is done, love to God becomes the great and controlling motive to action. Again: If the entire influence of motives is inconsistent with moral agency, then a man who is entirely enslaved by any perverse, wicked passion, as covetousness, malice or revenge, is no longer a moral agent, and no longer culpable for his conduct; that is, a man ceases to be a moral agent and to be blame-worthy for his conduct, because he violates the commands of God in a high degree, whereas if he had violated them in a lower degree he might have been considered as worthy of blame!

Dwell a little upon this point. Suppose a case preposterous as it may be, in which a man is not entirely under the influence of motives. Suppose he performs some very useful action, in which he is partly influenced by love to God or love to man, or some other good motive, and partly by something else which is not a motive, that is, partly not influenced at all. Now in what light do you view him? So far as he is influenced by a good motive, you can have no difficulty. He is thus far praise-worthy. But so far as he acts without a motive, in what light will you regard him? He cannot be praise-worthy, because he acts without a good motive. He cannot be blame-worthy, because he acts without a bad motive. Both of these positions are clear, as we do always by the constitution of our minds refer to motives as determining actions to be good or bad. Now as a man, so far as he acts without motives, is neither praise-worthy nor blame-worthy, what is he? Certainly he cannot be regarded as a moral agent, for moral agency always implies desert of praise or blame. But if he is not a moral agent, what is he? Is he a dreamer or a madman? Even a dreamer or a madman is influenced by motives, though they operate irregularly, just as a watch without a regulator is still kept in motion by the elastic power of the spring.

Digitized by Google

So far then as a man acts without motives, I leave you to judge in what predicament he must be placed.

The supposition above made, and our own reflections upon it, are sufficient to show that just in the degree in which any one acts without motives, or otherwise than as he is influenced by motives, he is so far from having a more perfect moral agency, that he has none at all; is so far from exercising a more perfect freedom, that he comes into subjection to some blind, fatal impulse, which acts independently of reason and in opposition to it. There is, it may be, a kind of freedom secured in this way, but it is freedom from the influence of reason. It is freedom from the principles and laws which essentially belong to our intelligent and moral nature. And such a freedom, if a privilege, is the privilege of brutes.

If a man is partly influenced by good motives and partly by bad, then we consider him as partly praise-worthy and partly blame-worthy. Is it not then manifest that the difficulty, which the doctrine of moral necessity occasions as to moral agency, is imaginary? that the fact of our being influenced by motives is involved in the very idea of moral agency, and that the more perfectly we are under the influence of motives, the more perfect is our accountable and moral agency? This conclusion entirely agrees with the instructions of the Scriptures, which everywhere represent men to be praise-worthy or blame-worthy for acting under the influence of motives, that is, for acting as they are impelled to act by their own dispositions or feelings in view of outward objects, and which never undertake to influence their actions or to improve their characters in any other way, than by the power of motives.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LV.

DIFFICULTY AS TO MORAL INABILITY CONSIDERED, ALSO AS TO THE DIVINE PURPOSES, OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD, AND THE WORK OF HIS SPIRIT IN SANCTIFICATION.

THE discussions, in which we have been engaged, will I think help us to clear away several difficulties in relation to our present subject.

First. A difficulty has been supposed to arise from the doctrine of *moral inability*. Come then directly to the point, and take the case, so often brought into view, of unrenewed sinners, who according to the representations of the Scriptures cannot believe in Christ, and cannot obey the divine law. The question is, if they are unable to believe and obey, how can they be held guilty for not believing and obeying? How can they be culpable for not doing that which it is impossible for them to do?

Now to avoid needless difficulty arising from ambiguous terms, just do what is acknowledged to be perfectly allowable and fair in other cases, that is, lay aside, for the present, the words inability and impossibility, and employ others which will clearly and fully express what is meant by these. The inability spoken of is such as we should naturally suppose it to be, from the fact that it relates to a moral agent and results from moral causes. The question then, freed from ambiguity, is this. If sinners are kept from believing in Christ by the moral causes which influence them, that is, by the wicked dispositions of their hearts, how can they be culpable? It is really a strange question, and might be answered by asking, how they could be culpable, if they were

Digitized by Google

kept from believing in any other way? The fact, that they are hindered from believing by the wicked dispositions of their hearts, is the very thing which constitutes their criminality. And it would be singular indeed, if that which we know to be the very thing which constitutes blame-worthiness, should be thought inconsistent with it. Considering what kind of inability this is, and in what it consists, that is, the wickedness of the heart, it is as certain as any truth in morals, that the higher the inability rises and the more uncontrollable it is, the greater is the degree of guilt. If a man has a heart, so proud, so worldly or so selfish, that we are led to say emphatically, it is impossible for him to leave off sinning, or according to the representation of Scripture, he cannot cease from sin any more than the leopard can change his spots, *he* is the man who is worthy of the severest condemnation. This then must be fixed once for all, namely, that which constitutes a wicked man's inability, and makes it impossible for him to obey God, is the strength of his corrupt inclinations or his criminal passions. Now to say that any one on this account cannot repent, or that it is impossible for him to obey the gospel, is the same as to say, he is blame-worthy in a very high degree. Accordingly when the inspired writers would set forth the inexcusable wickedness of sinners in the clearest light, they say, that sinners cannot believe, and cannot be subject to the divine law, that it is as impossible for them to cease to do evil and learn to do well, as for the Ethiopian to change his skin. The language is indeed metaphorical, inasmuch as words, which in their literal sense express an inability of another kind, that is, belonging to physical subjects and arising from physical causes, (as a man's inability to fly) — are used to denote an inability belonging to an intelligent being, arising from moral causes, that is, the sinful dispositions of the heart. But this metaphorical language is naturally prompted, as in other cases, by the strength of our conceptions and feelings, and is easily understood by those who know what such conceptions and feelings are. The chief reason, why there is so much mistake on this subject, is the want of a clear and vivid impression of the

Digitized by Google

nature of that which constitutes the inability, and of the infinite evil involved in it. Let the minds of men be opened to the hatefulness and malignity of sin, consisting in the wicked disposition of the heart, and they will perceive at once that the invincible strength and obstinacy of that disposition, which prevents sinners from repenting and urges them forward in their fatal career, is so far from affording any justification of their conduct, that it constitutes their guilt and stamps their characters as objects of unqualified abhorrence. It is here then we should lay out our principal efforts. We should treat this inability of sinners, not so much as a subject of philosophical reasoning, as of moral perception and feeling. While a man is unable to see, it is in vain to reason with him as to the nature of an object which can be known only by sight. The first thing to be attempted is to cure the disease of his eyes and give him clear vision, so that he may see the object the nature of which you wish him to understand. Let it not be forgotten that the prevailing error in regard to the subject is primarily an error of feeling, not of intellect. Of course we cannot expect to remove it by arguments addressed merely to the understanding.

Secondly. Another difficulty respecting moral agency has been supposed to arise from the doctrine of the divine purposes, or from the doctrine of necessity as involved in the divine purposes. In a previous Lecture we looked at this difficulty from another point of view. The present question is, whether the doctrine of God's unchangeable purposes, which plainly implies such a necessity, can be reconciled with man's free agency. Now if any one affirms that these doctrines are inconsistent, let him show what the inconsistency is. I know it has often been asserted, that an eternal, immutable purpose of God, determining the actions of men, puts them under a necessity of performing those actions which is totally at variance with their freedom as moral agents, that it sets aside and destroys their accountableness, and makes them passive machines. But has it ever been proved that the divine purpose, or the necessity involved in it, does in fact destroy man's free agency? A man may say, if he pleases, that the law of gravitation is

Digitized by Google

inconsistent with the motion of a clock. But such an assertion is entitled to no regard, unless the alleged inconsistency can be clearly proved. If the divine purpose is really incompatible with moral agency, it must be because it takes away or opposes something which belongs to that agency. If all the properties and circumstances of moral agency exist without hinderance or impediment under the influence of a divine purpose, as perfectly as they could if there were no such purpose, then certainly there is no inconsistency between them. Examine this point then, and inquire whether there is anything in the eternal, immutable purpose of God, or in the necessity implied in it, which interferes with any part of moral agency. To make the examination easy and satisfactory, take a particular case. It was most certainly the determinate counsel and purpose of God that Paul should preach the gospel to the Gentiles. And in preaching the gospel, he was under the influence of the divine purpose, as much as a man ever was. Now I ask you, first, whether the Apostle had a real *agency* in preaching? Was he active in it? He certainly was active. He exerted the most intense agency. If Paul was not active, what man ever was? But did he exercise a *free* agency? Free from what? I ask. It was certainly free from physical compulsion. But if by a free agency is meant an agency free from the influence of motives, such as love to Christ and desire for the salvation of men, then certainly Paul's agency was not free, for these affections not only existed, but were so powerful as to govern all his actions. The love of Christ constrained him. If Paul had been free in this respect, that is, free from the influence of his own dispositions or affections, he could have exercised no moral agency. For it is manifestly essential to a man's moral agency, that he should act according to the dispositions of his own heart and be influenced by them. Again; was Paul *voluntary?* He certainly was. From love to Christ and a desire to advance his kingdom, he willed to engage in the work of preaching to the Gentiles. Both in taking upon him the office of an Apostle and in all his labors in that office, he was perfectly voluntary. He acted according to his will. Again. It is the part of a discreet moral agent, that in important

Digitized by Google

matters he deliberates before he acts, and chooses in consequence of deliberation. This is what Paul did. He carefully weighed the subject before him, and yielded to those considerations which he found to be most important. These are the main points. Paul was an agent, he acted. In his agency he was free from compulsion, free from every blind, convulsive passion, and from whatever might tend to unhinge his rational powers. He was voluntary, and his choice was always conformed to his dispositions. And, finally, he acted with deliberation. Now if, while acting according to the divine purpose and under the influence of the divine purpose, he still possessed and exercised everything which moral agency implies, then what becomes of the alleged inconsistency between his moral agency and the divine purpose? And what confusion must pervade the understanding of any one, who seriously thinks them inconsistent!

The views I have expressed in regard to the Apostle are of universal application. The divine purpose can never be considered as incompatible with moral agency, if while acting under that purpose we do really exercise the whole and every part of moral agency. Whether the two things are compatible, that is, whether they can exist together, is to be learned, just as the consistency of all other facts is, by experience and observation. For the sake of illustration, suppose that any one wholly unacquainted with the subject should inquire, whether the absence of sensation and the suspension of voluntary motion in sleep is compatible with the regular pulsation of the heart and the continued activity of the will and other mental faculties; in what way could he determine this? Surely by determining whether there is in fact a regular pulsation of the heart and a continued activity of the mental faculties in sleep. As soon as he should find what is the fact, he would consider the question of consistency determined. And universally, whenever we inquire whether any two things are consistent, we must deem it satisfactory to find, that they have in fact uniformly existed together without interference. This must be satisfactory, even in cases where previously to the knowledge of facts we should be most likely to suspect an inconsistency. We might,

Digitized by Google

for example, think that the general law of gravitation is utterly inconsistent with some of the properties of the magnet. But when we find that the magnet actually possesses those peculiar properties, without losing any of its weight, we have no further question as to their consistency. The same as to the present subject. When we have found it to be true, that God has predetermined the actions of men, and also that we are moral agents, we have come to the end of our inquiry. If the two things actually exist together, we know certainly that they are consistent, which is really the same thing as knowing that they do exist together. After finding this, we have nothing to do but to give such a description of the two things as shall correspond with Scripture and our own consciousness. But if after all any one thinks that moral agency cannot exist together with an immutable divine purpose, it must be because he disregards the evidence of facts, and indulges groundless and false imaginations.

Thirdly. It is the doctrine of reason and revelation that in God we live and move and have our being, that we think and speak, choose and act, with power derived from him. The question is, how this universal dependence of ours, which involves one form of moral necessity, can consist with our being free, moral and responsible agents.

Here we arrive at satisfaction in the same way as before. First, we inquire for evidence of each of these points, — our dependence on God, and our moral agency. The evidence in one case is different from that in the other, but perfect in both. And this perfect evidence of the existence of the one and the other, is equally perfect evidence that one is consistent with the other.

Again; we examine the subject of our dependence by itself, and the subject of our moral agency by itself, and particularly search out the nature and circumstances of each. Then we inquire whether in whole or in part, they interfere with each other? If they interfere, how and in what respect? Take anything essential to moral agency, take for example the consciousness of good and evil. Does our dependence on God interfere with

Digitized by Google

this? Have we any the less consciousness of doing right when we obey God, and of doing wrong when we disobey, because we are dependent? Does the circumstance of our being created and dependent, exclude the sense of guilt in us when we commit acts of dishonesty and malice? On the contrary, does not the very consideration of our dependence on God impress our minds with our obligation to worship and obey him, and make us feel with additional force, that we are without excuse if we neglect this? Further. Does our dependence on God hinder us from being voluntary? Or does it hinder us from being influenced by rational motives? Or you may vary the method of inquiry thus: Does our consciousness of right and wrong, or our being voluntary, or our being influenced by motives, or anything else belonging to moral agency, prove that we are not dependent on God? And this is much the same as to ask, whether our moral agency proves that God is not our Creator and Preserver; or whether God's having made us is consistent with our being moral agents. As to this, I think we might more properly ask, how we could be moral agents, if God had not made us. In truth, the Almighty Agency of God on which we are entirely dependent, instead of interfering with our moral agency, is the cause and the only cause of it.

Fourthly. This brings us to the last point of difficulty on which I shall now remark, that is, the Scripture doctrine of divine influence in the sanctification of sinners, which involves moral necessity in another form. The Scriptures teach that it is God who renews men to holiness, and works in them both to will and to do. The question is, how we can be under obligation to be holy, and be praise-worthy when we are holy, if God produces holiness in us.

We may answer this question, as we have answered others, by showing that there is evidence of the divine influence in producing holiness in us, and evidence also of our being under obligation to be holy, and praise-worthy when we are holy. And this will be the same as showing, that there is evidence of their being consistent with each other.

Digitized by Google

The Scripture view of this subject seems to me to be encumbered with no special difficulty. The Spirit of God is the cause of holiness in moral agents. In other words, it is the Spirit of God which influences them, as moral agents, to love God, to repent, and to do what is right. Holiness being an effect, which takes place in dependent sinful beings, must have the Holy Spirit for its cause. And if one thing is the cause of another, they are surely consistent, that is, there is a consistency between one of them as a cause and the other as an effect. And why should it seem strange to any man, that God should be the cause of such an effect? Is he not competent to produce the effect? Is holiness of such a nature, that it cannot be an effect, produced by a divine cause? To assert this would be to assert that holiness cannot exist in any created being. For it is clear, that the existence and all the properties and actions of created beings must be the result directly or indirectly of God's agency. They must be so, or they must be self-originated and independent. But who will maintain the principle, that in order to be moral agents we must be self-existent or independent? Who will maintain that God cannot create a dependent agent, and cause that dependent agent to exercise holiness? But if God is able to produce such an effect, and if holiness is of such a nature that it may be an effect, then there is nothing incredible and nothing inconsistent with moral agency in the doctrine that the commencement and the continuance of holiness in man is the effect of the divine operation.

I might here remind you of the principle, so ably and perfectly maintained by Edwards, that the praise-worthiness or blame-worthiness of a thing depends not on its cause, but on its nature. And I might also appeal to moral feeling and Christian experience. Did any apostle or any other good man ever regard his own piety and holiness as less excellent and less worthy of approbation, because it was wrought in him by the grace of God? When Paul mentions the variety of lovely and praise-worthy virtues, he mentions them as the fruit of the Spirit. And so they are regarded in the prayers and praises of all the saints.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LVI.

MORAL AGENCY CONTINUES THROUGH ALL CHANGES OF CHARACTER. THE NARRATIVE GEN. III, A SATISFACTORY ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST HUMAN SIN.

THERE is one more subject connected with the doctrine of moral agency and moral necessity, to which I would ask your attention, namely, *the existence of moral evil, and particularly the commencement of human sin.* This is a subject which has for ages produced a deep interest in the minds of men. It has been a standing topic for those especially who have been fond of abstruse investigation. A multitude of treatises have been written on the subject, some of them with a good measure of ability, a larger number weakly or obscurely, and a few with clearness and plain common sense. For me to think of discussing this subject satisfactorily or usefully, may expose me to the charge of presumption. But in whatever difficulties the subject may be involved, and however inadequate I may be to the task of clearing them away, I may perhaps be able to give a few proper and useful hints as to the limits of human knowledge, and to turn your thoughts to what is intelligible and obvious and certain. This is what I shall attempt to do, willingly leaving other parts of the subject to those, who may have a particular liking to what is uncertain and obscure, and to what lies beyond the sphere of human intelligence.

The first point I shall bring to view is, that *moral agency continues unimpaired and uninterrupted through all the changes which take place in the character of men.* These changes, so far as

Digitized by Google

I shall speak of them, may be included under the following heads; first, change from entire holiness to sinfulness; second, change from entire sinfulness to holiness; third, change from a less to a greater degree of sinfulness; fourth, change from a less to greater degree of holiness. My position is, that man is a moral agent and exercises all the powers necessary to moral agency, when he changes from a state of moral rectitude to a state of depravity, and proceeds from one degree of depravity, to another; and also when he changes from a state of entire depravity to a state of holiness, and rises from one degree of holiness to another. Of the first of these changes, that is, from holiness to sin, there has been no instance in our world, except that of Adam and Eve. Of all the others, there are instances innumerable. Through all these changes, I maintain that moral agency remains unimpaired. This appears,

First, from the very terms employed to express the change. A man changes from holiness to sin, or from sin to holiness, or from a less degree of one of these to a greater. But what is holiness or sin, but a moral property belonging to a moral agent? The very fact that one exercises holiness or sin, presupposes that he is under a moral law, and is praise-worthy or blame-worthy for what he does. A change from holiness to sin, or the reverse, is, if the terms have any meaning, a change from one exercise or state of moral agency to another. To speak of holiness or sin, except as the property of a moral agent, would be a solecism.

Secondly. The truth of my position appears from this consideration, that everything which constitutes moral agency is found to belong to man through all these changes of character. When man changes from holiness to sin or from sin to holiness, he continues to be *intelligent*. He possesses and exercises his intellectual faculties, when these changes take place, as much as he does at any other time. If he changes from sin to holiness, he exercises his understanding right. If he changes from holiness to sin, he still exercises it, though improperly. So far then as reason or understanding goes to constitute a moral agent, man's

Digitized by Google

moral agency remains through all the changes which can be supposed in his character. We find also that he as perfectly retains and exercises *affection* and *will*, when changes of character take place, as at any other time. When he changes from holiness to sin, he begins to love and to choose what is bad. When he changes from sin to holiness, he begins to love and choose what is good. And these first exercises of affection and will are as free and as complete as any subsequent ones, though perhaps not equal in degree. Further: In all the changes of character, which take place, man is *influenced by motives*. A man, who has been uniformly obedient to God, does not cease to obey and begin to disobey without a motive. He is as much influenced by motives in such a change of character, as in anything else. He is the same as to all the attributes and circumstances of moral agency. The most thorough examination will show that they all exist here without diminution or interruption.

Thirdly. This is evident from the fact, that *these changes themselves are made the subjects of divine precepts*. God requires men to change from sin to holiness, and forbids them to change from holiness to sin. But God does not merely command men to change from sin to holiness, and not to change from holiness to sin, but enforces his commands by various and powerful motives. All this implies, that a man must exercise his moral agency in obeying or disobeying these commands, as much as in any other action of his life. We conclude then that God's giving us these particular commands must imply that we are moral agents in respect to the changes of character to which these commands relate.

Fourthly. The unbiassed conviction of every man's conscience shows that moral agency is never interrupted or diminished by change of character. This view of the subject is more or less implied in previous remarks, but it deserves to be considered more distinctly. Let any man then, who has turned from sin to holiness, reflect on this change, and on himself in respect to it. Let him ask himself, — did I not do right in turning from sin, in ceasing to hate my Maker, and in beginning

Digitized by Google

to love and obey him? Had I not sufficient reasons for such a change? Do I not approve of myself for having submitted to the influence of those reasons? Do I not feel it to have been suitable and virtuous and holy, that I became a friend to Christ? The answer, which the conscience of every converted man must give to such inquiries, will contain a full recognition of his own moral agency in the act of his conversion, as clearly and as perfectly so, as in any virtuous action he ever did or can do. It is the same, if a man has turned from holiness to sin. The spontaneous sentiment of his own heart is, that he has done wrong. He disapproves and condemns himself for it. In his own unfettered conscience he considers it to be a criminal act, as much as any sin in his subsequent life. So it evidently was with our first parents, and so it must be with every moral agent who falls from holiness to sin, whatever may be the influence that acts upon him.

Let us now pause and see what purpose is answered by this train of remarks. The position which I have here taken will and must, I think, be regarded as one of the things which are plain and certain. You will then consider it as perfectly settled, and never again to be the subject of doubt, that man's moral agency continues unimpaired through all the changes which take place in his character. In regard to this part of the subject you cannot reasonably indulge any doubt, and you need not feel any difficulty. When you recur to instances, in which men are turned from sin to holiness, you have no occasion whatever to perplex yourselves in regard to these changes, any more than in regard to the common actions of life. And when you recur to the first human sin, and consider that man, who had for a time rendered uniform obedience to God, did at length, under the influence of temptation, become a transgressor, you have indeed the strongest reason for astonishment and sorrow, that a change took place so criminal in its nature and so dreadful in its consequences. But you have not the least reason for any difficulty as to the consistency of that event with moral agency. As a moral agent, man was as capable of committing

Digitized by Google

the first sin, as any subsequent sin. To begin to transgress is as much within the province of moral agency, as to continue to transgress. It was truly most grievous and deplorable, that the father of the human family sinned against God. And it was grievous and deplorable too, that David and Peter and Judas sinned against God, and that all men have sinned. But you are to remember that the father of the human family, and David and Peter and Judas were equally moral agents. The moral agency of Adam in his first offence is as plain and certain, as that of any man in any offence he ever commits. You have then no more reason to ask, how it could be consistent with moral agency that Adam who was holy became unholy, or began to disobey, than to ask how it can be consistent with moral agency, that any man now disobeys, or continues to disobey.

The difficulty which many feel on this subject arises, I apprehend, from an incorrect view of the laws or principles which pertain to the mind of a moral agent. They seem to imagine that every affection must be like the preceding affection, and so that there certainly will and must be in every moral agent, an unbroken, perpetual series of affections of the same kind. But experience shows that changes in the affections of moral agents actually and often take place, and of course that the supposed principle does not exist. It is indeed the case, that affections of the same kind are likely to continue, and that in ordinary circumstances there is a strong tendency to this. But we well know that such causes may operate upon the mind as will interrupt the uniform series of affections, and excite those which are of a different character from any which preceded. Accordingly whatever may be true as to the prevailing tendency of things, it cannot be considered as one of the laws of the mind, that the same affections will certainly be continued. And when in any case the series of good or bad affections is interrupted, and those are exercised which are different from the preceding, we are not to consider this as superseding any established law of the mind appertaining to moral agency. And we have no occasion to ask, *how it can be*, as though such a law was violated. I shall just add, that if changes from

Digitized by Google

holiness to sin and from sin to holiness occurred as frequently, as changes in respect to the degree of holiness or sin, we should no more consider the former inconsistent with the laws of moral agency than the latter.

My next general remark is, that *the simple narrative given in Gen. 3d is to be received as a true, unreserved and satisfactory account of the first human sin.* The account is true. It agrees with facts. The things mentioned actually took place, as they are represented to have taken place. The account is unreserved. Nothing is purposely concealed. Everything is told, which is essential to a just view of the case. The account is satisfactory. It not only relates the fact of the original transgression, but mentions the circumstances which led to it, and in this way as really accounts for it, as history in any other case accounts for human actions. Is the history which the Bible gives of the conduct of Joseph's brethren, of Pharaoh's opposition to Moses, of David's offence in respect to Bathsheba, of Herod's treatment of John, of Peter's cowardice, and Judas's treachery, to be received as satisfactory? The answer is easy, if we consider that nothing is necessary to constitute a satisfactory history of any misconduct, but to describe the misconduct as a matter of fact, and to show what were the circumstances which led to it. In regard to the instances just referred to, the sacred historian describes the conduct of Joseph's brethren in selling him, of Pharaoh in opposing Moses, of David in committing adultery, and of Herod in beheading John, and suggests to us the motives by which they were led to commit those sins. In like manner, the author of the Pentateuch gives us an account of the transgression first of Eve, then of Adam, and informs us what temptations operated upon them, and how they were influenced to transgress. There was a motive presented to the mind of Eve, which in the view of the tempter was suited to influence her and which actually did influence her to disobey the divine command. And the same as to Adam.

We must acknowledge that there are difficulties attending this subject, which we are not able to solve. And it seems very

Digitized by Google

natural to expect such difficulties in relation to an event, which lies beyond the circle of our experience; an event which occurred so many thousand years ago, when man possessed a character and was in a condition so different from what has ever belonged to human beings since. But in a metaphysical view, what greater difficulty are we obliged to encounter respecting the first sin, than respecting any other? No affection or action of man can exist without a cause. In the ordinary sense, the cause of an affection, and of a consequent action, is the consideration, the motive, which excites it, in connection with the state of mind from which it proceeds. In this sense, the motives presented to Adam and Eve, in connection with the state of mind they then had, and with all their circumstances, were as really the means of inducing them to commit the first sin, as motives were the means of inducing them to transgress at any subsequent period. In this respect then, there is no peculiar difficulty attending the first sin. And if you refer to the supreme cause of all things, is there not as real a difficulty in the case of every other sin, as of the first sin? No affection exists and no action is performed independently of the Supreme Being. Other causes produce affections and consequent actions as God has appointed, or according to his wise and holy constitution. The motive, which led to a sinful act in Adam many years after he apostatized, had no more efficacy independently of the appointment of God or the laws of mind which he had established, than the motive which led to the first sin. Who has a right to say that God had any more concern in regard to the first sin, than he has in regard to any other? In respect to the first and all that follow, it is the divine constitution or appointment, which invests motives with power to induce a sinful action; or if you choose another form of expression, it is God who orders things so that sin shall exist in a moral agent as the effect of motives, or as the consequence of temptation. This, I repeat it, is as much the case in regard to all the sins of men, as it was in regard to the first sin. And if so, then is it reasonable to suppose, that there is any more difficulty as to the cause of the first sinful affection,

Digitized by Google

than there is as to the cause of any other? Instead then, of pursuing the inquiry in reference merely to the first sinful affection, make the inquiry general, and pursue it in reference to every sinful act. Why should we perplex ourselves with the imagination, that there is anything more inscrutable in regard to free, moral agency, and more difficult to be accounted for in the first sin, than in any other, considering that sinful doings in all cases equally result from motives, that motives in all cases equally owe their efficacy to a divine constitution, and that the manner in which God imparts efficacy to motives is, in all cases, equally correspondent with the laws of moral agency.

That man always exercises his faculties in a state of entire dependence on God must be allowed by all who believe the Bible, or who soberly consider the condition of created beings. It was the declaration of a heathen poet and of an Apostle after him, that *in God we live and move and have our being.* But neither the dependence of intelligent beings, nor the divine agency as to the existence of moral good and evil — whatever else may be true respecting it — is such as to be at all inconsistent with the nature or condition of natural and accountable beings. The agency which God exercises, is an agency which preserves all the intellectual and moral powers of man, secures them against force or coercion, coalesces with them, and makes it certain that nothing shall hinder their free and unconstrained operation. In other words, the divine agency, instead of destroying or interfering with moral agency in man, first makes man a moral agent, and then continues him perpetually in the exercise of moral agency. It supports all the faculties of the mind and guards them against interruption. It prevents coercion. It secures man against all influence, except that which is suited to an intelligent, free and accountable being. Thus on all sides it guards moral agency against infringement, and renders it complete in all its parts. This it did in regard to the first sin, and this it does in regard to sin in all cases. Instead therefore of contemplating the difficulties in relation to Adam's first sin, — an event at a great distance, — let us, if need be, contemplate

Digitized by Google

them in relation to objects which are near, and with which we are familiar, that is, our own sins and the sins of our fellow creatures around us. And as there are difficulties which are incapable of solution, and depths which we cannot fathom, let us be so just and candid as to acknowledge it in regard to those things which occur every day in our own experience, and not lay out our thoughts so disproportionately, as we may have been inclined to do, upon an event which took place six thousand years ago, and which is described to us in the most concise and simple manner, not to gratify an unhallowed curiosity, but for practical purposes. And let us ever guard with sacred care against the folly and sin of pretending or even of aspiring to know what lies so far beyond the grasp of our feeble understanding.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LVII.

THE INABILITY OF SINNERS TO OBEY THE DIVINE COMMANDS.

THE subject which is now to be considered, and which has in previous Lectures been repeatedly brought into view, is in some respects perfectly plain. But by means of controversy, and in other ways, it has been involved in such obscurity and perplexity, that some special efforts seem to be necessary to place it in a clear and satisfactory light; — efforts which I am not a little reluctant to make, because the subject has been understood and treated in so many different ways, and because these different modes of treating the subject have, to such an extent, become visible marks of different parties in religion. But from a long and intimate acquaintance with those who have adopted different modes of handling the subject, I have been happy to learn, that they differ more in their phraseology, than in their opinions. And I hope, by the following discussion to make this evident; and thus to do something towards accomplishing an object which I regard with strong desire, that is, a more manifest and cordial agreement among evangelical Christians.

In my treatment of this subject, I shall have the pleasure of going in company with such men as Edwards, Dwight, Smalley, Fuller, Day, and other well known defenders of sound theology. My purpose is, to proceed with as much distinctness as possible, attending to one thing at a time, but taking care that nothing of consequence shall be omitted.

Here, as in other cases, instead of going about to establish any theory of my own, I invite you to go with me directly to the

Digitized by Google

word of God, which we are always to regard as the infallible standard of our faith and our practice, and which, by common consent, teaches the truth in plain, intelligible language, and employs words in a sense manifestly suited to the purposes of religious instruction. You will certainly find it safe and advantageous to receive your first impressions on the subject from the holy Scriptures.

Let us begin then with the text in John 6: 44, "No man *can* (*δύναται, is able*) to come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." No man is, of himself, able to do this; and if any one does it, it must be ascribed, not to any power which he possesses, but to an influence exerted upon him from above, that is, *the drawing of the Father*. In a following verse, the thing is expressed in different language: "Therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it be given him of my Father."

Matt. 12: 34, Jesus said to the Jews: "How can ye, being evil, speak good things; for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." He had just before illustrated the same sentiment by the figure of a tree, and its fruit, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad. For by the fruit the tree is known." Then follow the words; "How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." The same illustration is used, Matt. 7: 18, "A good tree *cannot* bring forth evil fruit, nor an evil tree good fruit."

John 5: 44, "How can ye believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God?" The interrogative form is used for the purpose of saying with greater force, that they who seek worldly honor *cannot* believe in Christ.

John 12: 39, "Therefore they *could not* believe; because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, etc." That is, they could not believe because they were in such a blinded, hardened state.

John 8: 43, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye *cannot* hear my word."

Digitized by Google

Rom. 8: 7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be. The Apostle first asserts the fact, that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God. He does not however content himself with affirming this, but goes on to say further, that the carnal mind *cannot* be subject to the law. And in the next verse, he affirms the same thing of those who possess the carnal mind: — "So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God" — cannot render that obedience to the law which is pleasing to the Holy Lawgiver.

1 Cor. 2: 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit; for they are foolishness to him; neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." You see here also, that the Apostle does not stop with asserting the mere fact, that the natural man does not know the things of the Spirit, as though that were all which belongs to the subject, but declares the additional truth, that he *cannot* know them, suggesting the obvious reason namely, that the things referred to are of such a nature that they can be discerned only by the spiritual mind.

2 Tim. 3: 7, The Apostle speaks of some who, though always learning, "are never *able* to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Heb. 6: 4—6, The writer speaks of some whom it was *impossible* to renew to repentance.

Jer. 13: 23, "*Can* the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good who are accustomed to do evil."

On a certain occasion Jesus asserted that it was as difficult for a rich man to be saved, as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. His disciples exclaimed, "who then can be saved?" Jesus did not tell them, that they had mistaken his meaning, and that there was no such difficulty as they understood him to affirm; but simply said to them, "With men it is *impossible*, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Salvation cannot come from the power of man, but can come from the power of God, Matt. 19: 26.

Digitized by Google

Such is the representation of Scripture respecting the inability of sinners to do what is required. And how is it with the *regenerate?* Do the sacred writers ascribe even to them the power to render holy obedience to God? It must surely be supposed that true Christians possess as much power to obey, as impenitent sinners, there being no reason whatever to think, that persons lose any part of their power by conversion.

See then what the Scriptures teach on this point. John 15: 4, 5, "As the branch *cannot* bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me, — without me ye can do nothing." Ye are no more able, without help from me, to bear the fruits of holiness, than a branch is able to bear fruit when separated from the vine. This is the precise sentiment conveyed by the words of Christ. And this sentiment his apostles remembered and felt. There is nothing which they assert more strongly than their dependence on divine aid. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves," the Apostle says — "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." In 2 Cor. 12: 7 — 9, we are informed, that the Apostle prayed to be delivered from a particular infirmity, but that Christ let his infirmity remain, and answered his prayer indirectly, that is, by affording him the assistance he needed. "My grace," he says, "is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me." In Philip. 4: 13, the Apostle shows very clearly how he felt in regard to this subject. He says; "I can do all things." A very bold assertion surely! A very extraordinary claim! "I can do all things!" But how? Was he conscious of having sufficient ability in himself? No. He claimed nothing like this. His reliance was upon the power of Christ. "I can do all things *through Christ who strengtheneth me.*" He expressed the same sentiment in his direction to believers, 2 Tim. 2: 1, "Be *strong* in the grace that is *in Christ Jesus.*" Ephes. 6: 10, "Be *strong* in the Lord and in the power of his might." And in ch. 3: 16, of the

Digitized by Google

same epistle, he prays that believers may "be strengthened with might by God's Spirit." Under the former dispensation the people of God had the same conviction of their own weakness, and the same reliance upon the power of God. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." "The Lord is our help." "Our help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth." "Strengthen thou me according to thy word;"—all which is in accordance with the devout language of the writer to the Hebrews, 4: 16, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

This is the current language of the sacred writers in regard even to believers. They have no power of themselves to obey the divine commands. Without Christ they can do nothing. It is only through Christ who strengtheneth them, that they can accomplish their work. His strength is made manifest in their weakness. They are not sufficient of themselves to do any thing spiritually good, and they trust in God to strengthen them. This is true of all the followers of Christ, and this they know to be true. And can it be that unbelievers are in a better condition than they as to sufficiency of power to obey God? Far from it. The Scriptures, as we have seen, teach plainly, that unrenewed sinners cannot come to Christ unless they are drawn of the Father; that they cannot be subject to the law, that they cannot believe, that they cannot please God. And I desire you to take particular notice, that the inspired writers do not teach this truth in a timid, hesitating manner, as though they were afraid that what they were saying might not be quite true, or might mean too much. They assert it *boldly* and *emphatically*. Nor is it a thing which they teach indirectly or by implication merely. They teach it *directly*, and in *so many words*. And they maintain it *constantey* and uniformly, when they have occasion to speak on the subject. They do not say at one time that unrenewed sinners cannot believe in Christ and cannot obey his commands, and at another time that they can. As to that inability of which they speak and which properly belongs to the subject, they always teach the same thing, declaring repeatedly that sinners cannot obey, and never intimat-

Digitized by Google

ing the contrary. Further, the sacred writers never appear to apprehend that what they say of sinners will in the least interfere with their moral agency, or their obligation to do their duty. Nor do they ever take pains to qualify what they say, in order to guard against the danger of such interference. In their free, artless and fearless way, they declare, that unrenewed sinners cannot be subject to the divine law, and cannot come to Christ except the Father draw them; and they leave it to common sense, candor and experience to give the interpretation. What the proper interpretation is we shall inquire at another time. My present remark is, that the sacred writers would not so frequently and forcibly declare that sinners cannot obey the divine law, unless they had good reason to declare it, and unless they considered it a truth of momentous import. No one can deny or even doubt this statement without implicitly charging the inspired writers with error; and this would be to impute error to the Holy Spirit. As I have a deliberate and confident belief, that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, and that the sacred pen men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, I must hold that they taught the exact truth on the subject before us, and taught it in a just and proper manner, and that the case of sinners is really what the Bible represents it to be.

Before proceeding to a further discussion of the subject, I invite your attention to one particular conclusion from the Scriptural view which we have taken of the sinner's inability.

If then it was proper and important for the sacred writers to teach the sinner's inability to obey God; the same must be proper and important for us. And if the language which they employed to convey this instruction was just and suitable for them; it is just and suitable for us. And if they trusted to the nature of the subject and the drift of their discourse to indicate the meaning of the words which they employed; we may properly do the same, certainly in the ordinary course of instruction. It is undeniable, that fallen man is the same now, as he was formerly; that the obstacle in the way of his believing and obeying is the same; and, of course, that there is the same reason to say, that he *cannot* obey. And

Digitized by Google

who can doubt the propriety of pointing out that inability in the same manner?

This view of the matter appears to me so important, that I shall present it to you again in a varied form. Did not the inspired writers judge correctly as to the real condition of the unsanctified? And in what they taught respecting it, did they not employ language that was plain and intelligible and well suited to enlighten the conscience and touch the heart? And why should not we copy their example in regard to this subject, as well as in regard to any other? And if we faithfully copy their example, and teach the same thing in the same or in a similar manner, can any one reasonably object? If any one does object, I ask, why? Is not the sinner as dependent on divine help now, as he was formerly? Is he not in himself as poor and needy, and as destitute of spiritual strength? What then can be more safe and more becoming, than for us to follow the example of the inspired writers in teaching a doctrine, which is equally true of all men at all times and in all circumstances? Our obligation to do this is evidently involved in the great Protestant principle that *the Bible is to be received as a perfect and infallible guide.* How do we make the Bible our guide, if we neglect to teach what it teaches, or neglect to do it in the same or a similar manner? While the word of God declares that sinners *cannot* obey the gospel, suppose we say in unqualified terms that they *can.* While the word of God represents it as exceedingly difficult, and without divine help *impossible* for sinners to be converted and saved, suppose we say, it is neither impossible nor difficult, but as much within our power as the common actions of life; would this be making the word of God our standard? Do the sacred writers assert that sinners, without the influence of the Spirit, can believe and obey the gospel — that they are as able to do this, as they are to rise up and walk — do they assert this, or any thing like this, as a means of taking away the excuse which sinners are prone to offer, and impressing upon them a sense of moral obligation?

It is sometimes said that the sacred writers considered the ability of sinners to be so evident, that there was no need of

Digitized by Google

affirming it, that they always took it for granted, just as they took it for granted that man exists, and has the faculties of a rational being.

I reply, that it would be strange indeed, if they took that for granted, which was contrary to what they taught. I allow indeed, that what is often meant by ability, that is, the powers and faculties essential to moral agency, did so manifestly belong to sinners, that the inspired writers, who taught this truth in the best manner, did not think it necessary to make it the subject of direct affirmation, but assumed it as an acknowledged principle. The question then is, why *we* should not treat the matter as they did.

But you may ask whether the circumstances of the present time do not render it expedient and necessary to adopt new modes of instruction. Are there not new errors to be confuted, new false refuges to be exposed, and new mistakes to be corrected? And must not our manner of teaching be adapted to the accomplishment of these objects?

It is, I agree, very important, that our manner of teaching should be suited to the different states of the human mind, and to the circumstances of the present day; and that we should earnestly endeavor to expose the ever-varying forms of error, and to remove from the minds of men whatever hinders the salutary influence of divine truth. And if the declarations of Scripture that unrenewed men cannot obey the divine law, and cannot come to Christ unless the Father draw them, are misunderstood, and hence prove the occasion of error; it is our duty carefully to explain them, and thus to remove error, and to inculcate upon the minds of men the true meaning of the word of God. But how can any one think, that *contradicting* the word of God is the right way to explain it? The Apostle Paul declares that they who are in the flesh *cannot* please God. Who can suppose it to be a proper explanation, to say of the same persons, that they *can* please God? Who can suppose that we explain the passage, John 6: 44, by saying, in direct contradiction to the declaration of Christ, that sinners *can* come to him

Digitized by Google

without being drawn of the Father? It is our duty to search the inspired volume with reverence and submission, and, instead of using any language which is really or apparently opposed to its declarations, to endeavor to find out and exhibit the true meaning of those declarations. A right explanation of the passages above quoted relative to the inability of sinners would show as clearly as possible, *in what sense and on what account* they cannot believe and obey, and so would guard against ascribing to them an inability which does not belong to them, and which the sacred writers never meant to ascribe to them. If the texts referred to are ever made use of to countenance any particular error, we should labor to expose that error, and to shield the minds of men effectually against its influence. In the next Lecture I shall endeavor to give the explanation which is required. What I would say here is, that while we freely use the language of Scripture, or other language similar to it, we should endeavor, at proper times, to give that language a faithful explanation, and thus to guard the minds of men against mistakes, and to impress them with the true meaning of the divine word.

Finally; if on such a subject as this, we would teach the truth and confute error; may we not most effectually accomplish our object by going back to the serious, plain, practical manner of Christ and the apostles, employing the same considerations, and more frequently the very language which they employed? If it should appear that the meaning of Scripture phrases has been changed, so that they do not now convey the sense which the inspired writers intended to convey by them; it should then be our aim to restore its original and proper sense, so that when we would teach the same things which Christ and the apostles taught, we may teach them in the same manner.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LVIII.

THE NATURE OF THE SINNER'S INABILITY EXPLAINED.

HAVING in the previous Lecture brought distinctly before you various texts of Scripture, in which it is affirmed that sinners *cannot* comply with the requisitions of the gospel, my present object is to show as clearly as possible what is the sense which those texts are intended to convey. And in doing this I shall endeavor to conform to just and established rules of interpretation.

And here I must regard it as a point not to be called in question, that the inability which is predicated of sinners, is a *reality*, not a *fiction*. We may be assured that the inspired writers would not have asserted it so earnestly, and with such a serious emphasis, had they not regarded it as a very *important* truth. If in setting it forth they employed language more or less figurative, they did it, not to detract from the reality or the importance of the truth which they declared, but to illustrate it more clearly, and to impress it on our minds more strongly and permanently. Keep in mind therefore, that we have now to do with a fact, and one of tremendous import in regard to our spiritual interests.

But while it cannot be denied, that the texts which represent sinners to be the subjects of an inability to obey the gospel, teach a certain truth, — an inability which is real and of serious moment; we are not therefore to regard them as teaching, that sinners are the subjects of *every kind of inability*. For it may be, that the sacred writers had their eye upon an inability of

Digitized by Google

one particular kind; and the drift of their discourse and the nature of the case may clearly show what kind of inability was intended. And if this is made to appear, it would be wholly unauthorized to suppose, that they meant to assert an inability of *any other* kind, and especially that they meant to predicate of sinners *every* kind of inability. When they affirm the inability of sinners for the very purpose of showing the high degree of their criminality, it would be absurd to suppose, that they speak of an inability which would *exclude* criminality.

The general remarks I have now made, may be applied to a multitude of cases, in which the sense of particular declarations of Scripture must be limited by the nature of the subject, and by the evident scope of the writer. For example, when the sacred writers speak of sinners as *blind and dead*, we cannot suppose they meant to teach that sinners are blind and dead in every sense. They evidently refer to what we call a *moral* or spiritual blindness and death. Sometimes they show this to be their meaning by expressly declaring that sinners have a blindness of *mind*, and are dead in *trespasses and sins*. In regard to such a subject, when we find a particular thing asserted in the Scriptures, the fair presumption is that a particular and specific sense is intended, and that, by proper inquiries, we may discover what that sense is. But it would be doing violence to the Scriptures to suppose, that whatever they affirm is to be considered as true in every possible sense.

My present object is to ascertain in what particular and specific sense we are to understand the sacred writers, when they assert that sinners cannot obey the divine commands.

It may contribute something to the accomplishment of my design, to notice distinctly, that the inspired writers *require* the sinner to obey the divine commands — that they require this often — that they require it always when the subject comes before them — that they require it in the most unequivocal and emphatical terms, and that they require it of the sinner as unhesitatingly and earnestly as of the believer. There is no more appearance of any doubt or draw-back in their minds in the one

Digitized by Google

case, than in the other. And they uniformly ascribe it to the sinner's own fault, which exposes him to just condemnation, that he does not obey. This is an important point, and it leads to two conclusions. One is, that commanding the sinner, just as he is, to obey God, is perfectly proper. For those who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, cannot be supposed to have given to the sinner any unjust command. If we think otherwise, we do not think as the inspired writers did. The other conclusion and that which relates directly to our subject is, that the inability of the sinner cannot be of such a kind, as to exempt him from the obligation to obey, or to diminish the guilt of disobedience. We may suppose a kind of inability that would exclude all obligation to obey. If any one is deprived of the faculty of reason and conscience, and is a complete idiot, his incapacity to obey God is such that he cannot be properly required to obey, or blamed for not obeying. But we are sure that the sinner's inability is not such as to have this effect in any degree.

But we have direct and certain means of understanding the nature of the inability spoken of; the most important of which is, a careful examination of the passages themselves where the inability is brought into view. Some of these passages very clearly indicate what kind of inability is intended, Matt. 12: 34, "How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "How *can* ye?" But what was the hinderance? Why could they not speak good things? The reason was suggested: "How can ye, *being evil*, speak good things?" Their heart was evil, and from such a heart good cannot come; as Jesus had just said in relation to the same subject: "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." The badness of the tree prevents.

The passage, John 5: 44, indicates what kind of inability is intended. "How can ye believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" That which hindered their believing was their ambition — their love of worldly honor. It was this which kept them from receiving Christ and obeying his gospel.

Digitized by Google

John 12 : 39, "Therefore they could not believe." Why? "Because that Esaias said," or because as he said, "he hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts;" that is, because they were in such a state — blinded and hardened by sin. This sinful blindness and hardness constituted their inability, or was the reason why they could not believe. Rom. 8 : 7, 8, brings out the same sentiment very clearly. What is the reason why those whom the Apostle mentions, *cannot* be subject to the divine law, and *cannot* please God? The reason is, that they are in the flesh, and have that carnal mind which is enmity against God. It is this which stands in the way as a hinderance to their obedience and their acceptance with God. In like manner our Saviour suggests what it is which renders it so hard for a rich man to be saved, that is, his love of riches. And that which rendered it so difficult for those mentioned in Jer. 13 : 23, to cease to do evil and learn to do well was, that they were *accustomed* to do evil.

In these and other places, the kind of inability which belongs to the sinner is suggested by the words which the sacred writers employ. The passages themselves show in what respect and for what reason an inability is predicated of the sinner.

In other places the kind of inability intended is made known by implication, or becomes evident from the nature and circumstances of the subject. John 6 : 44, "No man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him." Jesus said this to unbelieving, cavilling Jews. They, being what they were, could not, of themselves, come to Christ. The hinderance lay in their character. Of this you will be still more satisfied from the consideration of that divine influence which was necessary. It was an influence to draw them to Christ, or to induce them to believe, implying that they were indisposed to come to Christ — that they had no heart to believe.

John 8 : 43, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye cannot (ye are not able to) hear my word." What follows shows why they could not. "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He that is

Digitized by Google

of God heareth God's words. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Their ungodly disposition was what hindered them from receiving divine truth. Had they been of God, or possessed the heart of God's children, they would have gladly heard his words.

We must also attend to those texts which set forth substantially the same thing in different language, John 5: 40, "Ye will not (*ου θέλετε,*) ye are *not willing* to come unto me that ye might have life." The cause which prevented was the same. So it was with those mentioned in the parable of the Supper, who said, "We cannot come," because they had a predominant attachment to other objects. From this text, in which Christ said, "ye will not come unto me," it is natural to infer that the *unwillingness* or *indisposition* mentioned is the very thing which constitutes the *inability* spoken of in other places. The manner in which the sacred writers treat this subject plainly implies that the sinner's inability consists of that which is morally wrong and blame-worthy; that is, in wickedness of heart, or a disinclination to do the will of God.

We have arrived then at the conclusion, that the inability of the sinner to obey the gospel consists in his settled aversion to holiness — in the unyielding perverseness of his heart. It is because his depravity is so deep and entire as absolutely to prevent him from coming to Christ, that the Scriptures say, he cannot come. As he has that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and which effectually hinders his obedience; it becomes just and suitable to say, that he *cannot* be subject to the law, and *cannot* please God. And as an inability of this kind is sufficient fully to justify the language of the sacred writers, we have no reason to suppose that they meant to assert an inability of any other kind. When Jesus put the cutting question to the ambitious Jews; "How can ye believe, who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor which cometh from God only;" he pointed out an inability to believe of a particular kind, that is, the love of worldly honor. And there is no room left to suppose that he referred to an inability of

Digitized by Google

any other kind. The unbelieving Jews were not like to those, spoken of by the Apostle, who cannot believe in Christ because they have never heard of him, nor to those who are destitute of the necessary mental faculties. An inability of the kind which we are considering implies all that is necessary to the existence of moral agency. Should any one cease to be a moral agent, he could not be chargeable with a culpable inability to obey the divine commands.

Consider here the remarkable simplicity and artlessness of the sacred writers, who never manifested any particular anxiety about their expressions, and never seemed to take any pains to guard against what might possibly be misunderstood or perverted. In regard to the subject before us, they had in their own minds clear conceptions and strong emotions, which they wished to convey to the minds of others. And being themselves under a powerful impulse, they expressed themselves with a freedom and force which would make a just and powerful impression on the minds of the candid and honest, though liable to be misapprehended by persons of a captious or prejudiced temper. — There is in fact a mighty hinderance in the way of the sinner's believing in Christ, a hinderance which nothing but the power of the Holy Ghost can remove. The question is, how this hinderance, consisting in the desperate wickedness of the heart, shall be truly and adequately expressed. Shall the sacred writers say, that the sinner does not believe and will not repent? This they do say. But this is not all that they say. They had occasion to express themselves in other and more forcible language. They say that the sinner *cannot* believe and *cannot* obey. And most certainly they say the truth, and say it in a right manner. There are no forms of speech by which they could set forth the truth on this subject more unexceptionably, than those which they employ. They do indeed employ the word *cannot* in a peculiar sense. But this peculiar sense is not an *unusual* sense; and it is a sense which agrees with the nature of the subject and which is suggested by the circumstances of the case. And were we now, for the first time, to be rightly impressed with the depravity of the sinner, and were we for the first time to speak

Digitized by Google

on the subject with suitable earnestness and fidelity, we should, I doubt not, adopt the very language, so just and natural, which we find in the Scriptures, and should say, that the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed *can* be; that they who are in the flesh *cannot* please God; that the selfish and proud *cannot* believe in Christ. Such language would be the genuine expression of our conceptions and feelings, as it was of the conceptions and feelings of the sacred writers. It is generally the case at the present day, that when sinners are thoroughly convinced of sin, they spontaneously adopt this emphatic language respecting themselves, not to justify or excuse themselves — far from it — but for the purpose of expressing what they feel as to the desperate wickedness of their hearts, the greatness of their guilt, and their utter ruin, unless they are saved by grace. Who can impute any mistake or incorrectness to those who speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? Did not Christ and the apostles know what was the truth, and what was the best manner of teaching it, and what mode of instruction would be safe and proper in following ages? Their language and their whole manner of teaching, being conformed to the truth, and suited to the principles of human nature, must be just and proper so long as truth and the principles of human nature remain the same. Still the disposition of men to pervert the language of Scripture and turn it into an apology for sin, evidently imposes upon us the duty of explaining it, and of guarding with all possible care against the errors which may be occasioned by it. But to object to the language itself, or to doubt its propriety, or to give the preference to that which is different and opposite, would be to dishonor the Author of holy writ.

I shall here introduce an appropriate quotation of some length from Dr. Smalley's treatise on the sinner's inability.

"There is," he says, "a real necessity for using such terms as — *incapable*, *cannot*, etc. in that diversity of signification in which they are used in common speech as well as in the Scriptures. For whenever any thing, whether in ourselves or without us, is absolutely inconsistent with our doing a thing, we have no

Digitized by Google

way fully and strongly to express that inconsistency, but by saying, we *cannot* — it is *impossible*, or using some other word of like import. Now it is certain that the want of a heart or inclination to do a thing may be as inconsistent with our doing it, as anything else could be. Covetousness is as inconsistent with liberality, as poverty is. The want of an upright heart is as inconsistent with the character of a good ruler, as the want of wisdom. And the want of all principles of virtue must be as inconsistent with acting virtuously, as the want of those intellectual faculties which are necessary to moral agency. Every one must act his own nature and choice, or he does not act himself *he* is not the agent. And if when we would express this sort of necessity, we should not use the same phrases as are made use of in cases of natural necessity, but, for fear of being misunderstood, should carefully avoid saying, a man *cannot*, when we mean merely that he has not such a heart as is necessary, and should only say that he *will not* — our language would often sound odd, being out of common custom, which governs the propriety of words; and not only so, but *it would not be sufficiently expressive.* Should we be afraid to say, it is impossible for a man to love God while his heart is altogether wicked and full of enmity, — people would think we imagined this might sometimes happen, and that there was no real impossibility in it of any kind, whereas there is as real and absolute an impossibility in this case, as in any supposable case whatever. To be more guarded therefore than the Scripture is, would be to be *unguarded.* The Apostle demands: 'Can a fig-tree bear olive berries, or a vine figs?' And our Saviour says: 'A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things.' There is as certain and never failing a connection in this case, as any natural connection whatever; — which ought by no means to be dissembled, but to be openly maintained. But then it is certainly of a quite different and even opposite nature to

Digitized by Google

all intents and purposes of moral agency. And it is of the last importance that this also should be maintained, and manifested to every man's conscience."

There is still another consideration which shows the propriety of the language above mentioned in the case before us; namely, that such language is used in other cases without objections from any one. Thus, Heb. 6: 18, it is said to be *impossible for God to lie.* What kind of impossibility is intended? Not any deficiency of power to do whatever God pleases, but his moral perfection. It is *impossible* for a Being of infinite righteousness and holiness to lie. Now who can object to the word impossible in this case, as not suited to express the thing intended? And yet there is no impossibility except what arises from God's moral excellence. But did any man on this account ever contradict the Scriptures, and say, that such a Being as God *can lie?*

In 2 Tim. 2: 13, It is said of Christ, that he *cannot* deny himself. His immutable holiness prevents. And Peter said of himself and the other apostles, Acts 4: 20, "We *cannot* but speak the things which we have seen and heard." The only necessity in the case was their ardent love to Christ and their strong conviction of duty.

Similar language is used in common discourse. Of a man whose character stands high in our esteem, we say, he *cannot* do a mean or dishonest thing. Of a just judge we say, he *cannot* be bribed. Ask a covetous man to give money in charity, and he will say, I *cannot* do it. A tender mother *cannot* forget her infant child.

Such is the language of feeling and of common life. And such is the language of the sacred writers. And why should it not be ours?

The chief objection is, that sinners may take occasion from it to excuse themselves for their impenitence and disobedience. They may say, if we cannot repent and obey, how can we be under obligation to do it?

I am aware that sinners, destitute of conviction, often per-

Digitized by Google

vert the language of Scripture in this way, and take occasion from it to justify themselves in the neglect of duty. On this account we should labor to give them faithful instruction respecting their own character, and to convince them that they have no such inability as can in the least excuse them for disobedience. We should explain the nature of their inability, and should show them that it only indicates the greatness of their guilt.

If you would entertain a just view of this subject, you must keep in mind, that telling the sinner he *cannot* of himself repent and believe is not the cause of his impenitence and unbelief; nor will his impenitence and unbelief be removed by telling him that he *can* repent and believe. Tell him what you will, either that he can or cannot obey the gospel, he has, while unrenewed, a heart which will certainly prevent his obedience. Tell him as the Scripture does, that while unrenewed he *cannot* please God; and he may pervert your declaration, and make it an occasion of stupidity, or despondency, or self-justification, unless the Spirit of God illuminates his mind and teaches him that the difficulty lies in his own inexcusable wickedness. If you speak to him in another way, and tell him, what the Bible does not tell him, that, though unregenerate, he has full power to repent and believe; he will doubtless make your declaration the occasion of self-confidence and delusive hope, unless the divine Spirit interposes to prevent. But if he is favored with teaching from above, he will quickly learn that he has no such power as he supposed — no power in his natural state which he can rely upon; that his confidence in his own strength is groundless; he will learn the solemn truth taught in Scripture, that he has the carnal mind which is enmity against God, and which is not and cannot be subject to the divine law, and that holiness in all of its forms is of God. As soon as he is effectually taught of the Spirit, he will adopt the sentiment of Scripture, and will express it in the language of Scripture.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LIX.

RECAPITULATION. PRACTICAL BEARING OF THE SUBJECT.

I HAVE endeavored to illustrate these three positions.

1. The Scriptures teach that there is an inability in sinners to holy acts. We must therefore conclude that such an inability is a *reality*, and is the great and only hinderance to faith and obedience.

2. It is just and proper to express this inability of sinners in the language of inspiration, and to say that men, while unrenewed, *cannot* be subject to the divine law, and *cannot* please God.

3. The inability of sinners arises not from the want of any intellectual or moral powers which belong to accountable agents, but from the desperate wickedness of their hearts. Or perhaps it is more correct to say, their inability *consists in* the wickedness of their hearts.

Hence it follows, that to assert, as the sacred writers do, the inability of sinners to obey God, is to assert their criminality. And any one who, with a proper view of his own condition, says that he cannot love and obey God, must say it in the way of penitent confession, and must mean to imply, that he is inexcusably guilty.

It follows too from what has been said, that the greater the degree of inability to love God and obey his law, which is found in a moral agent who is duly enlightened, the greater is the degree of his guilt. If his inability to love and obey is only partial, his guilt is partial; if total, his guilt is total.

Digitized by Google

It is of great importance that we should entertain just views of the practical bearings of the subject before us, and particularly that we should be well aware of the natural consequence of departing from the language of Scripture and adopting that which is different and opposite. Suppose then that instead of saying that unrenewed sinners *cannot* believe and obey, you tell them they *can* do it, — that they possess sufficient power in themselves without the influence of the Spirit; and that if they were not *able* to obey, they would be under no *obligation* to obey. What will be the natural consequence? Why, those to whom you thus preach, after searching the Scriptures, will come to you and say; — you inform us that if we are *unable* to obey God, we are under no *obligation* to obey. Now the Scriptures often declare, that we *are unable*, but never, that we are *able*. Taking your instructions and the declarations of the Bible together, we must conclude, that we are under no obligation to obey the divine commands, and that your endeavors to make us feel our obligation are misapplied.

This is one of the natural results of your making affirmations contrary to the express declarations of Scripture. And there is still another unhappy consequence, namely, an impression upon the minds of your hearers, that there is a disagreement between you and the inspired writers. This impression must occasion great perplexity in their minds, diminishing their respect for your preaching, or for the Bible, or for both.

But you may ask, what is the fault in the preaching just supposed? Is there not a sense in which sinners *can* do what God requires? Have they not some kind of *ability?* Yes, they have some kind of *ability*. They are not in *every* sense unable to obey. They have no such inability as excuses or palliates the guilt of disobedience. But they are the subjects of another kind of inability, which in the Creed of the Professors of this Seminary, is called a *moral incapacity*. Being under the influence of the carnal mind which is enmity against God, they *cannot* render him an acceptable obedience.

But how do we satisfy ourselves on this point? When the

Digitized by Google

sacred writers affirm that unrenewed sinners *cannot* believe and obey, how do we determine what their meaning is? I answer, the subject and drift of their discourse show that they have their eye upon an inability of a *moral* kind, because they are dealing with men respecting their duty, and the ground of their condemnation. This is all very plain. Now if, while speaking of sinners as the sacred writers did, we say that they *can* obey God — that although unregenerate, they have a perfect *ability* to do all which God requires; we shall be understood to contradict the word of God, and to deny the inability which Christ and the apostles affirm; of course to deny that depravity of the heart which keeps sinners from obedience and renders the renewing of the Holy Spirit necessary to their salvation.

But in other circumstances, our conclusion would be different. If as philosophers we are setting forth the essential endowments of moral agents, the intellectual and moral faculties which belong to men as the subjects of a moral government, and if while speaking of men in this respect we should assert that they have no power to obey the commands of God — that they are totally unable to do what he requires; we should be understood to deny the equity of the divine commands and the obligation of men to obey. In other words, we should be understood to ascribe to men what has been called a *natural inability* to obey the divine law, such as belongs to brutes and idiots, and which precludes moral agency. In this case as in all others, we must give a sense to words according to the nature and circumstances of the subject and the obvious design of the speaker or writer; — a principle which requires the exercise of diligent attention and candor, but does not necessarily expose us to any uncertainty. Those who undertake the work of teaching men the truths of revelation in regard to their state as sinners and of laboring for their conversion, have need of great wisdom and seriousness, fidelity and love of souls.

I shall here quote a few appropriate passages from a sermon of Dr. Emmons, published in the Christian Sentinel, March, 1847.

Digitized by Google

And I make these quotations with pleasure, because, although the author maintained very decidedly what is called man's *natural ability*, he here not only adopts the truth taught in Scripture, but falls in directly and entirely with Scripture phraseology. He takes for his text the passage in which the people, being solemnly warned by Joshua, promised that they would serve the Lord their God. But "Joshua said unto the people, ye *cannot* serve the Lord; for he is a holy God."

The author undertakes to show, first, that sinners generally think that they *can* serve the Lord; secondly, *why* they think that they can serve the Lord; and thirdly, *why* they *cannot* serve him.

First. Sinners generally think that they can serve the Lord. So long as God suffers them to walk in their own way, they think that they can serve the Lord, whenever they find it convenient or important. Though they feel a present reluctance to religious duty, yet they have no apprehension that their reluctance will ever become unconquerable. They are very confident that they can perform the service which God requires.

Secondly. *Why* sinners imagine that they can serve the Lord. This must be owing to some misapprehension of themselves, or ignorance of their own hearts.

Thirdly. *Why* sinners *cannot* serve God. Joshua assigned the reason. He said "ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is a *holy* God." Sinners are unholy; and so their hearts are opposed to God. And while they are in this state, it is impossible that they should perform any acceptable service to him. They cannot serve God because his law is perfectly holy, while they are unholy. As they feel a dislike and opposition to the divine law, they cannot conform to it. They do not love the service of God; and while this is the case, it is impossible that they should serve him.

Then come the author's inferences.

1. If sinners think that they can serve the Lord, then it is easy to see why so many live secure while they neglect to serve him. Mankind generally neglect to pursue what they suppose

Digitized by Google

they can obtain just when they please. It is owing to their confidence in their own power to serve God whenever they think it necessary, that they neglect it, and live so easy in their neglect.

2. If sinners are mistaken in thinking that they can serve God, then, it is very important that their mistake should be removed and that they should be made to see and feel that they *cannot* serve God, and to know that the reason is, that he is a holy God, to whom their hearts are opposed. If they think they can serve God because they are ignorant of their own hearts, then it is of great importance that the nature of their depravity should be clearly and fully laid open before them.

3. If the inability of sinners to serve God arises from the contrariety of their hearts to God, then it is altogether sinful and inexcusable. Their inability lies in their sin; and the more unable they are to love God for his holiness, the more inexcusable and sinful they are, because all their inability arises from the utter aversion of their hearts to that which is good.

These quotations though somewhat abridged, are generally made in the words of the author, and they all express his ideas exactly.

I have extended this discussion so far, because I have wished to avoid the fault of passing in silence over any thing of importance. There are a few points which deserve further notice.

Some writers assert with great earnestness, that the sinner has *power* or *ability* in the proper sense to do all which the divine law requires; and that, without holding this, we can have no just conceptions of his obligation, or his guilt. Now if they mean that the sinner has what is called *natural ability*, — that he is endued with all the rational and moral faculties which are necessary to complete obligation, and that nothing is wanting to acceptable obedience, but a right disposition or uprightness of heart; if they mean this, let them say so plainly, and thus put an end to controversy. All maintain that the sinner, though wholly destitute of holiness, fully possesses the powers and faculties which are necessary to moral agency. If by natural ability any one means

Digitized by Google

more than this, I ask him what it is. Now we agree that this natural ability, or this possession of rational and moral faculties, avails to create perfect obligation. But does it avail and can it avail to produce holy love and obedience? What kind of power has the man whose heart is enmity against God, to love God? Has he *voluntary* power? That is, has he power to love God by *willing* to love him? Can holy love be kindled in his heart by the influence of an unholy volition? We have seen that volition, whatever may be its character, is not the direct and proper cause of love — that the love even of a sanctified man is not excited by the power of a volition, even of a right volition. And it is very manifest, that the unholy volition of an unregenerate sinner can do nothing towards exciting holy love in his heart.

The question is sometimes proposed, whether man's *natural ability* may not be so used as to overcome his *moral inability*; — whether the sinner cannot by exerting the natural power which he possesses, change his own character, and bring himself to love and obey God.

Let this then be our inquiry, whether the sinner can so exercise his natural ability, that is, his natural powers and faculties, as to overcome his evil inclinations and bring himself to believe and obey the gospel. Can any supposable exercise of the power which he possesses, can the best exercise of it which is possible in his unrenewed state, make him holy? The influence of the Holy Spirit in renewing the heart is here excluded, and the question relates to the proper and sole effect of the best supposable exercise of power in the unrenewed. Can one who is destitute of holiness produce holiness in himself, or make himself holy, by any exertion of his natural power?

To those who believe the teachings of Scripture as to the necessity of being born again by the Holy Spirit, the bare statement of the question will be sufficient. The experience of Christians and of sinners conducts to the same conclusion. Man's natural power, which constitutes him a moral, accountable agent, never *has* availed to his sanctification. How favorable soever the circumstances in which he has been placed, and however diversified and earnest

Digitized by Google

his efforts, he has never attained to the smallest measure of holiness, without the renewing of the divine Spirit. Such is the result of past experience. And such will be the result of future experience. Unregenerate men will possess the powers of moral agents in various degrees, and in various circumstances, and will be addressed by an endless variety of motives, and those of great weight, and will be excited to the most strenuous efforts. But without the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, they will never attain to faith and obedience. Their natural powers, however excited, will always act in conformity with the predominant affection of their heart. What is it that moves men to act, but their inclination or heart? And if the heart moves them to act, their action will be according to their heart. If the heart is unholy, all the exercises which result from it will be unholy.

It hence follows very clearly, that the ability which sinners naturally possess, consisting in their intellectual and moral faculties, cannot be relied upon to produce obedience. Sinners themselves cannot rely upon it, as it can furnish them no ground to expect that they ever will repent and obey the gospel. If there is *any* reason for them to hope that they shall ever repent and obey, that reason does not lie at all in their natural ability. For without the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they will no more obey the gospel *with* their natural ability, than they would *without* it. In other words, the faculties of moral agents will of themselves no more induce them to obey, than the want of those faculties would. Had sinners a real *inclination* to repent and obey, they would have a just ground to expect that they will repent and obey; for they might reasonbly expect to act according to their inclination or heart. But surely they have no reason to expect, whatever their natural faculties may be, that they will ever repent and obey the gospel *without a heart to do it*. Such an expectation would be preposterous. Of course, it would be a great mistake in us to speak to sinners of their natural ability as a thing upon which they can in the least degree rely to bring about their repentence. For they will in fact be as certainly hindered from repenting by the wickedness of their heart, as if there was a natural impossibility in the

Digitized by Google

way. When sinners become sensible of their sinful and ruined condition, and the necessity of a change, and begin to feel that while unrenewed, they cannot render an acceptable obedience to God; if you tell them that they *can* do it, that they have in themselves a perfect ability to repent and believe, and do not need any special help from God to *enable* them to obey his commands; you will naturally lead them to rely upon their own ability for the high purposes of salvation. For why should they not rely upon their own ability to save them, if you tell them, and tell them truly, that they are perfectly able of themselves, to do all that is necessary to their salvation? And if this idea gets possession of their minds, they will certainly think their case very favorable, and will say in their hearts, why should we feel any more alarm or anxiety concerning our state, seeing we have in ourselves a perfect ability to comply with the requirements of the gospel, and thus obtain eternal life? How erroneous and dangerous must that instruction be, which contradicts the declarations of Scripture, and which evidently tends to produce in sinners a reliance upon themselves, and an expectation that they shall repent and believe to the saving of their souls because they have, as they are led to suppose, a full and sufficient ability for this.

I add one more remark, namely, that those rational faculties which constitute the natural ability of sinners, and all the ability which they have, are not at all *adapted* to overcome the alienation of their hearts, and to turn them to a life of holy obedience. What is called the natural ability of sinners is not *fitted* to such a purpose — it has no tendency or aptitude to produce such an effect. Their natural ability, that is, the powers and faculties of their minds have an obvious *fitness* and *efficacy* to accomplish other objects of signal importance, but they have no fitness or efficacy to accomplish this object. As the natural power of sinners, however great, is entirely under the control of their selfish and wicked hearts, it can never bring them to any holy affection or act; and if they rely upon it for this purpose, they will most assuredly be disappointed. Their natural ability,

Digitized by Google

consisting in the faculties of their minds, does indeed make them moral, accountable agents, and puts them under perfect obligation to obey the divine commands. But as it exists in their depraved minds, it tends only to evil, and will act itself out in evil, and only in evil.

Reason and conscience do indeed utter the sentence of divine truth, and warn sinners to cease to do evil and learn to do well. But they utter this sentence to a heart of stone that will not feel, — to a heart that loves sin and will not put it away — to a heart that hates God, and that cannot love what it hates. Take reason and conscience and self-love, and all the powers and dispositions of the unsanctified sinner, — take them either separately or together, and there is no more *adaptedness* or *tendency* in them to change the depraved heart and to originate holy love, than there is in a bad tree to produce good fruit, or in an impure fountain to send forth pure waters. Take care then how and for what purpose you speak to sinners of their natural power, and remember that how extensive soever that power may be, they will always without exception use it according to the dispositions of their corrupt hearts. They have no ability that will help them to overcome sin and to become holy, or that has any adaptedness to such an object. Beware then lest you encourage and strengthen in sinners that mistaken confidence in their own ability which they are of themselves so much inclined to entertain, and lest you thus become accessory to a delusion which may be fatal to their future well being. Dr. Day says: "If you tell the sinner in unqualified language, that he *can* repent, he will draw the conclusion that he *shall;* and will remain at ease, waiting his own time for repentance." And he closes the paragraph with this important suggestion: "Whatever language you use in impressing on the sinner a sense of his obligation and guilt, you need to guard it well, lest he remain insensible of his dependence on the influence of the Spirit."

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LX.

MAN'S DEPRAVITY. PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

In previous Lectures we have considered man as a *moral agent.* We shall now enter upon a particular consideration of him as a *depraved* moral agent. And it will be obvious to you, that when man is spoken of as *depraved*, *degenerate*, *corrupt* or *apostate*, there is an implied reference to the original state in which he was created, which the Scriptures represent to have been a state of moral purity and uprightness. The brief statement which is made in Gen. 3, and various passages in other parts of Scripture, manifestly imply that man in his primitive state was holy, and that the act of disobedience mentioned Gen. 3 : 6, was the *commencement* of human sin. What has been the character and state of man since the transgression of Adam and Eve, is the important subject to which I now solicit your careful attention.

The following preliminary remarks are intended to guard against groundless prepossessions and wrong modes of reasoning, and to prepare the way for a just and profitable discussion of the subject of human depravity.

First. *The consideration of the divine character cannot be made the ground of any presumption against the doctrine of human depravity or sinfulness, and can have no influence to invalidate the arguments by which the doctrine is supported.*

In reasoning on the present subject I shall proceed on the principle, that the existence and moral perfection of God have been

Digitized by Google

satisfactorily proved, and are unhesitatingly believed; and that he is a righteous and benevolent Governor. My position is, that this cannot be adduced as a proof against the doctrine of man's apostasy and sinfulness.

No man can urge the moral character of God as an argument against the doctrine of man's depravity, except on the supposition, that we are competent to determine by our own reason, in what manner God's moral perfection will be developed. If we make an appeal to revelation or experience, we shall find what all Christians, and what the most enlightened of the heathen, have found and acknowledged; that man is the subject of a deep moral depravity. But suppose that we were now at the period immediately after the creation of man, and that, with our rational powers in full exercise, we should look upon the innocent, happy pair in the garden of Eden, under the inspection of their Creator, and enjoying his constant kindness. And suppose the inquiry should be made; "*Will these holy and happy beings ever become transgressors of God's righteous law? Will God suffer them to fall into sin? And will their posterity have their existence in a state of moral evil?*" What would be the proper answer to such an inquiry?—the answer which would accord with the truth? We should probably be inclined to say, that such a disastrous event can never take place. God is infinitely good, and he will watch over his dependent, feeble creatures, and effectually guard them against danger, especially against the pollution and misery of sin. But if we should wait a little, and observe the course of events, we should learn that our judgment was premature. We should see the happy parents of the human race fallen into a state of guilt, and, through their offence, all their posterity "*constituted sinners.*" And thus the history of God's providence would teach us, that we were not of ourselves competent to determine in what particular manner his infinite perfection would be displayed.

The fact is, that the goodness of God is, in various respects, immensely different from all that we call goodness in man. And if we should undertake to determine, in particular cases, that

Digitized by Google

such and such acts will result from the *divine* goodness, because similar acts result from such goodness as *we* possess; we should fall into the most evident mistakes. Our proceeding in this manner would be to assume the principle, that we can measure the infinite perfections of God by our own views and feelings. It would be to forget that, while we are of yesterday and know nothing, the mind of God is infinite; — that while our views are confined within a very narrow compass, the mind of God comprehends the whole extent of the universe, and reaches through endless ages. Nothing can be more reasonable than to believe, that the divine wisdom and goodness, which are infinite, and which have respect to the whole system of the creation and to the whole length of eternity, must dictate measures exceedingly diverse from those which our finite minds would be likely to adopt.

This general principle is of special use in regard to a great variety of subjects, particularly with regard to the one now under consideration. We can properly make no inference from the moral perfection of God, which will interfere with our belief of man's depravity. We should be utterly unable, from our notions of the divine goodness to determine whether all or any human beings would be transgressors, or in what degree they would be depraved, or at what period of their existence, or in what manner, their depravity would commence. Facts show, and the Scriptures show, that many things are consistent with the goodness of God, which, judging from our own reason, we should have thought wholly inconsistent. We are to remember this; and to come to the inquiry *as to the moral state of man*, with a mind free from prepossession, ready to believe what is proved by proper evidence, and with a full persuasion that whatever we find to be fact as to the existence, the degree, the commencement, or the consequence of depravity in man, must be perfectly consistent with the moral attributes of God. Accordingly, the consideration that God is infinitely benevolent can have no more influence upon our inquiry respecting man's moral character and state, than respecting his mental faculties or his bodily senses. This subject must be treated wholly as a matter of fact.

Digitized by Google

This principle will entirely free us from one of the most perplexing difficulties respecting the reality and the degree of human corruption. If we take care to understand this important principle, and to have it fixed in our minds, we shall no longer deny or doubt that man is dead in sin, *because God is good.* It will no longer appear to us any stain upon the character of God, that a world of rational, moral beings have rebelled against him, and exposed themselves to his wrath. Feeling ourselves utterly incompetent to judge what would be suitable for a Being of infinite perfection to do in such a case, we shall take the attitude of learners. As soon as we find what God has actually done, and what he has not done, what events have occurred among his creatures, and how he treats those events, we shall be satisfied. Indeed, we shall be so far from thinking that anything which takes place among created beings is incompatible with the perfections of God, that we shall regard all his arrangements and operations in the natural and moral world, as manifestations of his attributes, and as means of giving us just conceptions of his character. And if, in any case, even where we find the greatest mystery, the question arises, *why God has done so*, we can readily answer, *because he sees it to be right.* This general answer, arising altogether from our confidence in the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, should be perfectly satisfactory, though the particular reasons of his conduct lie wholly beyond the sphere of our intelligence.

Secondly. No valid objection to the doctrine of human depravity can be derived from the fact, *that God created man at first in his own moral image.* In other words, *man's original holiness is not inconsistent with his present sinfulness.*

From the very constitution of his nature, man was finite and mutable. Though he was created holy, he was liable to become unholy. He had no such inflexibility of principle, no such strength of character, no such confirmation in virtue, as absolutely to secure him against sin. His certain perseverance in holiness could not be inferred from anything in himself. He was in his nature changeable, and was exposed to temptations which

Digitized by Google

might influence him to become a sinner. There was, therefore, no certain ground of his continuance in a state of holiness, *unless God saw fit effectually to preserve him from sin.* And it could in no way be inferred from God's moral perfection, that he would preserve him. He was under no obligation to do it. He would violate none of his perfections by not doing it.

Thus the matter stood. Man, as a moral agent, in a state of trial, might fall into sin. He was liable to change, and was exposed to the influence of causes which might induce him to change. God was not pledged effectually to preserve him from sin, and none of his perfections required him to afford such preservation. And there might be special reasons relating to his own glory and the interests of his moral kingdom, why he should not effectually preserve him. When therefore sin occurred, we cannot say there was anything incredible in it, or anything inconsistent with man's having been originally holy. And his original holiness cannot be mentioned as diminishing at all the evidence of his apostasy, or as any reason why we should not believe it. Difficulties may exist respecting this matter, and difficulties not to be solved. But the following things are evident, namely, that man, though at first holy, was changeable, and was exposed to the influence of circumstances which might induce him to sin; that the proof we have of his apostasy is to be admitted without hesitation, and that we can never consider it incredible, that a moral agent, in a state of probation, should transgress the divine law and fall under its penalty.

Thirdly. The chief reason which prevents men from rightly understanding and receiving the doctrine of human corruption, is, *their blindness to the extent and spirituality of the divine law, and their ignorance of their own hearts.*

The moral law is the standard of character. If we are conformed to its requisitions, we are holy; if not conformed, we are sinners. But men in general have no proper discernment of this perfect law, and no practical regard to it, as the rule of their actions. Their eyes are directed to other and very different standards, according to which they can think highly of them-

Digitized by Google

selves, though in truth they are guilty and vile. Every human being is himself an example of depravity. And he must learn its nature and malignity chiefly by a careful survey of his own heart and life. While he neglects to examine himself, and to judge of his moral feelings and actions by God's holy law, our arguments from Scripture and experience will fail to convince him of the truth, or at best will give him only an intellectual conviction, a dry, speculative notion of what his heart does not feel. Here is the great obstacle to the reception of that humiliating doctrine which we hold respecting the moral corruption and ruin of the human race. Men are occupied with other concerns and do not look into themselves. Or if at any time they do this, they disregard the only true standard of moral actions, and the only just measure of their obligations, and substitute another standard, which leads them to overlook their moral delinquencies and the utter alienation of their hearts from God, and to form an opinion of themselves which will free them from the pain of self-reproach, and gratify their self-love. They are like a man who, having a deformed countenance, induces a painter to make such a picture of him as shall conceal his deformities, and please his vanity by imaginary beauties, and then looks at it as a true picture of himself.

The fact that so many men reject the doctrine of human depravity and guilt, or form very inadequate and erroneous conceptions of it, is so far from disproving the doctrine, that it is in reality a striking illustration of its truth.

Fourthly. It is in no degree inconsistent with the doctrine of depravity, as set forth in the Scriptures, and as maintained by evangelical Christians, that *men in their natural state possess and exhibit many amiable, commendable and useful qualities.*

Men stand in various relations. Their character must of course be viewed in a variety of lights, and in each must be estimated according as it is conformed or not conformed to the rules of conduct arising from these various relations. They may have attributes corresponding to some of these relations, such as the natural relations of domestic and social life; and in reference

Digitized by Google

to these relations merely, they may be considered both amiable and useful, and even praise-worthy; while they have nothing which corresponds to the high relation they bear to God and to his spiritual law, and to their fellow men as subjects of that law. Accordingly the natural affections of parents and children, and all the social affections and sympathies are just as consistent as bodily appetites are, with the fact that man is without holiness, i. e. without that affection which is required of him in relation to God and a moral government. What then becomes of all that the deniers of human corruption have said of the lovely simplicity, the freedom from guile, the dutifulness and affection of children, and the sympathy, good will, gratitude, justice, and generosity which men in their natural state often exhibit? It is admitted that they may have all these lovely, useful and commendable dispositions, and that, in regard to all the common domestic and social relations, those who have these dispositions are to be regarded in a very different light from those who are destitute of them. But, after all, these natural dispositions, however amiable, and however useful their fruits, do not touch their relation to God, and to the immortal beings who compose his moral kingdom. And, for aught that appears, they may be as really destitute of that holy love and obedience, which is due from them in this paramount relation, as if they had nothing which corresponded to their other relations. I say they may be as *really destitute of holiness*. I speak not of the degree of positive wickedness. For evidently the extinction of the natural affections shows an extreme degree of depravity. Indeed, there is nothing but the practice of wickedness for a long time and with uncommon violence, which can extinguish the amiable and useful dispositions belonging to us as domestic and social beings. Hence when the Apostle speaks of persons as "without natural affection," his object evidently is, to describe those who are sunk to the lowest degree of vice. To sum up all in a few words; the natural affections, however cultivated and improved, and however attractive the forms in which they may be exhibited, do not constitute holiness, and are often found where no degree of holiness

Digitized by Google

exists. And they are so deeply rooted in the nature of man, that they cannot be eradicated, except by the influence of extreme wickedness, nor always even by this.

My last remark is, that *no theory intended to account philosophically for the fact that man is depraved, can free the subject from difficulty.*

As I shall enlarge upon this view of the subject in another place, I shall treat it briefly here. It will be found on careful inquiry, that the common theory of the orthodox relative to the doctrine of depravity is exposed to no greater objections than any other theory; that all the attempts which have been made by philosophical reasoning to avoid or to diminish the difficulties attending the subject, have effected but little; and that man's universal sinfulness is, after all, a *well known, dreadful fact—a fact, whether explained or unexplained, as certain as our existence.* Now as no hypothesis which has been invented for the purpose of accounting for man's depravity, and freeing it from objections and difficulties, has answered the purpose; we are brought to this conclusion; that *depravity is a fact which chiefly concerns us not in an intellectual, but in a moral view; that we are to make use of the doctrine for practical purposes, and that it is the part of Christian wisdom to receive those particular views of the subject which best agree with the current representations of Scripture and with lessons of experience and observation, to whatever speculative objections those views may be exposed.*

I have said this for the purpose of clearing the way before us, and making the object of inquiry as simple and plain as possible. In physical science we inquire for facts; for example, we inquire whether all bodies have a tendency to the centre of the earth, or to the centre of the solar system; how this tendency shows itself, and according to what laws it is regulated. We inquire, what peculiar tendency or power the loadstone has, and in what manner it operates. The same in every branch of natural science. Here we suffer ourselves to be encumbered with no hypothesis and no preconceived opinion. And if any

Digitized by Google

one should say to us, this or that thing, which is made known as a fact, is very strange and unaccountable, entirely different from what we should have supposed, and liable to difficulties which cannot be solved; it would be of no avail. We should be satisfied with clear evidence, and should believe the truth of facts, made known by uniform experience. What if the facts should appear strange and unaccountable, and should be attended with insolvable difficulties? To those who are just beginning to learn, everything may be strange and unaccountable. We know that many things with which we are familiar, and concerning which we have no difficulties, are very strange and are attended with insurmountable difficulties to a little child; and that they were formerly so to us.

Why cannot men be brought to exercise as much reason and common sense on the subject of religion, as they do on other subjects? In every department of natural science, they readily acknowledge *facts*, however new, and however contrary to their preconceived opinions. But when they come to the subject of religion, on which they are least of all capable of knowing anything except what Scripture and experience teach, they hesitate to admit what Scripture and universal experience make perfectly plain and certain. They doubt and even deny a doctrine which rests upon unquestionable facts continually occurring around them and within them. What can be done to convince men of the unreasonableness and folly of such a course, and to prepare them to receive with simplicity whatever shall be made known to them as truth by the word and providence of God?

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXI.

EVIDENCE OF DEPRAVITY FROM HUMAN CONDUCT. EVIDENCE FROM SCRIPTURE OF ITS UNIVERSALITY.

In commencing the argument in support of the common doctrine of depravity, I shall offer a few remarks on the particular kind of evidence which arises from *human conduct.*

This is a kind of evidence which is sanctioned by our Saviour himself. "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." On this principle we ground our judgments both of ourselves and others. External action is the only evidence of character which can fall under our observation, in respect to our fellow men. And external and internal action furnish the proper evidence of our own character.

Now the general current of human actions is such in relation to the divine law, as to afford conclusive and overwhelming evidence of man's moral corruption. If we turn our thoughts to the history of human conduct from the beginning of the world, we shall see that *man has been a sinner.* If we survey the conduct of man at the present day, in every situation and at every period of life, we still find evidence of the fact that *he is a sinner.* And this fact is made still more evident to each individual by his own moral feelings and actions. Who among the wisest and best of men can survey his own life, even for a single day, without being constrained to acknowledge that he is a sinner? Every one who attends seriously to his inward

Digitized by Google

exercises and outward actions, and compares them with the standard of God's law, will have a deep conviction of his own moral corruption.

The evidence which arises from human conduct in support of the doctrine of depravity, is *exceedingly various.* It is exhibited in all conceivable ways. Indeed the wickedness of the human heart has forced itself out in ways which, aside from our knowledge of facts, we should have pronounced impossible.

This evidence exists in *a very high degree.* The actions of men are not such that we are merely able, by careful examination, to discover some taint of moral evil in them. They have an obliquity which is palpable and prominent. They have a deep stain, like scarlet and crimson.

The evidence from human conduct is *constantly exhibited before our eyes.* Should we at any time forget the history of past ages, and begin to think that man is not so depraved as has generally been supposed; we should soon be awakened from our dream by the fruits of depravity in those around us, and especially in ourselves. Whether we are associated with our fellow creatures in the common business of life or in the concerns of religion, we cannot fail to witness in them, whoever they may be, clear indications of moral corruption. And if we are separated from the society of men and live in solitude, we shall still have evidence of this corruption from what takes place in ourselves. Wherever we go and whatever we do, this evidence is continually present with us.

From the history of human conduct, we have then evidence of depravity which is various, powerful, and constant. Indeed the evidence is so great, that it is difficult to imagine how it could be increased. There is, it is true, an effort among men, and we may often be conscious of such an effort in ourselves, to draw a veil over the naked deformity of sin, and to put on the semblance of goodness when the reality is wanting. But even this affords additional evidence of the evil which cleaves to our character. This attempt at concealment, this unwillingness to appear in a true light, is one of the most hateful properties of the

Digitized by Google

depraved heart. The more we are in the habit of searching out the deceitful workings of sin, and the various false refuges which it invents, the more deep will be our conviction of its power and malignity. It is on the whole difficult to conceive, how the evidence of man's depravity, arising from his actions, could be increased. To say the least, this evidence is so great, that we must be the subjects of singular obstinacy and blindness, not to be convinced, and of singular pride, not to be humbled.

The evidence already brought into view, even if there were no other, proves the moral depravity of man as clearly, as the evidence of facts prove any principle in natural science. Even the law of gravitation cannot be proved more certainly than "*the law of sin*" in man. If the law of gravitation is proved by the fact that all bodies, when left without resistance, show a tendency to move towards the centre of the earth; the moral depravity of man is proved by the fact that, when left to himself in circumstances which lead to a development of his moral character, he always shows a propensity to sin. The appearances of human nature from the first apostasy to the present time, and from early childhood to old age, evince the existence of a deep-rooted moral disease. That the nature of man has a wrong bias, or tends to evil, is seen and acknowledged by all who have the care of children and youth, or who seriously endeavor to persuade men to conform to the rule of duty. It is proved by all the restraints which discreet parents feel themselves obliged to impose on their children, and rulers upon their subjects; especially by those restraints which good men find it necessary to impose upon themselves. The facts which indicate the existence of moral evil in man are as various and clear, as those which indicate any bodily disease. And the more perfect our acquaintance with the conduct of men, and especially our own conduct, the deeper will be our impression of the moral disorder of our nature. It is not like a case in which a partial acquaintance with the symptoms of the disease excites fears which are allayed by a more perfect acquaintance. It is rather like a case in which our first observation might lead us to apprehend that a person is the subject of some slight infirmity,

Digitized by Google

still however leaving us in doubt whether there is any serious disorder, or what the disorder is, until our continued observation of the symptoms increases our apprehension, and finally makes it a certainty, that the patient has a disorder of the most alarming character, and incapable of being cured, except by the speedy application of extraordinary means.

To give a further illustration of the principle above stated, and to confirm still more fully the conclusion to which we have arrived, I subjoin a few quotations from writers of well known character.

Dr. Beecher says; "There must be and there is in man something that is the ground and reason that the will of fallen man does, from the beginning, act wrong, — *something anterior to voluntary action*."— "There must be some ground, in the nature of the race, for the early personal and actual sin with which they are all chargeable."— "To say that all men sin actually, and universally, and forever, until renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that against the strongest possible motives, merely because they are free agents, and are able to do so, and that there is in their *nature*, as affected by the fall, no cause or reason of the certainty, is absurd. It is to ascribe the most stupendous concurrence of perverted action in all the adult millions of mankind, to nothing. The thing to be accounted for, is, the phenomenon of an entire series of universal actual sin; and to ascribe the universal and entire obliquity of the human will to the simple ability of choosing wrong, is to ascribe the moral obliquity of a lost world to nothing."

"Even though," says Dr. Chalmers, "we had outward exhibition alone, we often have enough to infer and ascertain the inward tendency. We need not dig into a spring to ascertain the quality of its water, but to examine the quality of the stream which flows from it" — "It is thus that we verify the doctrine of original sin by experience. Should it be found true of every man that he is actually a sinner — should this hold universally true with each individual of the human family; — if, in every country of the world, and in every age of the world's history, all who have grown old enough to be capable of showing themselves, were

Digitized by Google

transgressors against the law of God — and, if among all the accidents and varieties of condition to which humanity is liable, each member of humanity still betook himself to his own wayward deviations from the rule of right — then, he sins purely in virtue of his being a man; there is something in the very make and mechanism of his nature which causes him to be a sinner." — "The innate and original disposition of man to sin, is just as firmly established by the sinful doings of all and each of the species, as the innate ferocity of the tiger is, by the way in which this ferocity breaks forth into actual exemplification in each individual of the tribe. If each man is a sinner, this is because of a pervading tendency to sin, that so taints and overspreads the whole nature, as to be present with every separate portion of it. And to assert the doctrine of original sin, in these circumstances, is to do no more than to assert the reigning quality of any species whether in the animal or vegetable kingdom. It is to do no more than to affirm the ferocious nature of the tiger, or the odorous nature of the rose, or the poisonous nature of the fox-glove. It is to reduce that, which is true of every single specimen of our nature, into a general expression that we make applicable to the whole nature. And to talk of the original sin of our species, thereby intending to signify the existence of a prior and universal disposition to sin, is just as warrantable, as to affirm the most certain laws, or soundest classifications in natural history."

"No man however," says Dr. George Payne, "has exhibited this point in a more luminous manner than the great Jonathan Edwards. The substance of his arguments, — is as follows. The uniformity of an event proves the existence somewhere of a tendency to that event. — For what is meant by tendency, but a prevailing liableness or exposedness to such an event?" — "Tendency to a certain disease, implies the probability of an attack of that disease, through the existence and action of certain elements in the constitution which may give birth to it. Now tendency is always inferred from facts. If a tree grows perpendicularly, and not horizontally, we say it has a tendency thus to grow. If water runs down hill, we conclude that it possesses a tendency to

Digitized by Google

flow in that direction. If a tree brings forth certain fruit, no one doubts its tendency to produce such fruit. If, then, the tree of human nature uniformly brings forth morally corrupt fruit, we not only may but we must infer that it has a tendency to bring forth such fruit; i. e. that the doctrine of the native depravity of man is true."

"Sufficient, we conceive," continues Dr. Payne, "has been said in justification of our conclusion, that the invariableness with which sin is committed proves the doctrine of original sin; or, that there exists, in the nature of man, a tendency to commit it. The conclusion rests, let it not be forgotten, not on the mere commission of sin, but on the *invariableness* of its commission. Our argument does not run thus: actual sin proves original sin. The case of the fallen angels, and of Adam himself, would disprove this assertion, were we incautious enough to make it. The argument is as follows: — all men, in every age, in every part of the globe, under every variety of circumstances, in spite of every conceivable moral inducement to avoid it, — all men have sinned. 'They sin, therefore,' to adopt the emphatic language of Dr. Chalmers, 'not solely because of the peculiar excitements to evil that have crossed their path; they have sinned not only because of the noxious atmosphere they have breathed, of the vitiating example that is on every side of them; but they have sinned purely in virtue of their being *men*.' The proper cause, or occasion of sin, in other words, is their own fallen nature."

"And, now," says Payne, "I should not do justice to my subject, were I not to add, that the horrible wickedness described by the Apostle, has abounded in the world in spite of all the means resorted to by Jehovah to check its progress."

"The conclusion we draw from the preceding proof of the universality of sin, in all ages and nations, in spite of all restraints, is, that there must exist in the nature of man a tendency to sin; in other words that the doctrine of original sin is a true doctrine. In the most favorable circumstances, the tree of human nature has brought forth bad fruit; its nature must therefore be corrupt. Or, to borrow an illustration from Jona-

Digitized by Google

than Edwards; 'If there were a piece of ground which abounded with briers and thorns, or some poisonous plant, and all mankind had used their endeavors for a thousand years together to suppress that evil growth, and to bring that ground by manure and cultivation, planting and sowing, to produce better fruit, all in vain — it would still be overrun with the same noxious growth; it would not be a proof that such a produce was agreeable to the nature of the soil in any wise to be compared to that which is given in divine providence, that wickedness is a produce agreeable to the nature of the field of the world of mankind. For the means used with it have been great and wonderful, contrived by the unsearchable and boundless wisdom of God, — medicines procured with infinite expense, exhibited with a vast apparatus, a marvellous succession of dispensations, introduced one after another, displaying an incomprehensible length and breadth, depth and height of Divine wisdom, love, and power, and every perfection of the Godhead — to the eternal admiration of principalities and powers in heavenly places.'"

We come now to the evidence from *Scripture* that all men are sinners. This evidence is nothing less than the testimony of that Being who knows what is in man, who is no respecter of persons, and who is perfectly qualified to be our Judge. It is the testimony of a benevolent Creator respecting his creatures, and of a holy and merciful Father respecting his children. In such a testimony we may be sure there will be no partiality and no injustice.

The particulars of the divine testimony in proof of the universal sinfulness of our race will be presented in the following order:

1. Passages *expressly asserting* the universality of sin.
2. Passages setting forth the sinful conduct of *individuals* and *nations*.
3. Representations in regard to other subjects which *imply* the universal sinfulness of man.

Digitized by Google

1. Passages *expressly asserting* the universality of sin.

Those which are found in the writings of the Apostle Paul, are very direct. Rom. 5: 12—19, "And so death passed upon *all men, for that all have sinned.*" This text clearly implies that all who die are sinners, or that the sinfulness of men extends as far as their mortality. Various expressions in the verses here referred to show, that all the posterity of Adam are in a state of sin and ruin. This is repeatedly affirmed in ch. 3: "We have before proved," says the Apostle, "that both Jews and Gentiles are *all* under sin; as it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." He then comes to the conclusion, that "all the world are guilty before God; so that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified in his sight;" which would not be true, if any were free from sin.

The declaration of God by the prophet Jeremiah, ch. 17: 9, conveys the same sentiment. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" The sense is unlimited. It is not the heart of *one man*, or of *one society of men;* but *the heart,—the human heart universally.* This sense is confirmed by the next verse. "I the Lord search *the heart;*" *the heart universally.* As there can be no limitation in this case, there can be none in the former. The heart which God searches, is that which is deceitful and desperately wicked. In Eccl. 9: 4, we find a similar expression: "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil." So, Gen. 8: 21, "The imagination of *man's heart* is evil from his youth." What does the anatomist mean, when he gives a description of the form and uses of *the heart*, as a part of the human body? And what does the writer on mental philosophy mean, when he speaks of *the mind, the understanding, the will, and the conscience?* Does not the form of expression always denote that what is said relates to man *as a species*, and is true of the species universally, unless there is an express or implied limitation? But it may be said, there *is* such a limitation, inasmuch

Digitized by Google

as the same writers who declare *that all are sinners, all corrupt, — that there is none that seeketh after God, or doeth good, no, not one*, also speak frequently of those who are *righteous*, of those who *seek God* and *do good.*

To set this matter in a proper light, we have only to make the Bible its own interpreter. How then does the sacred volume account for the fact, that there are some who form an exception to the general character of man, and, in the midst of a wicked world, are holy and obedient? Does it teach that they are so *by nature?* No. It unequivocally ascribes the character of those who are holy, *to the new creating influence of the Divine Spirit.* They were "by nature children of wrath, even as others." But they are "*born again;*" they "are *washed*, they are *justified*, they are *sanctified* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit of their God.*" They are what they are, "*by the grace of God.*" Now if they were holy by nature, the texts which declare that there is none righteous, would evidently be subject to limitation. But as those who are holy are not so in their natural state, and become so only by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they furnish no exception to the universal sinfulness of man, as he is by nature. Whatever men may become in this world or in the next, by redeeming, sanctifying grace, they are all in their natural state without exception, *dead in sin.* And it is not to be forgotten that even those who are holy and obedient, are so only in a very imperfect measure, having much remaining sin. So that if any say they have no sin, "they deceive them selves," and "make God a liar."

2. I argue from those texts which set forth *the sinfulness of individuals and nations* at particular times. Such as Gen. 6: 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This passage shows what was the character of the human race before the flood. "The wickedness of man was great." To the same class belong all the passages which describe the impiety and wickedness of Jews and Gentiles at different periods. These passages are very numerous,

Digitized by Google

and are found in the writings of Moses and the Prophets, in the Psalms and in the New Testament.

It is said, in the way of objection to the common mode of reasoning from such texts, that they relate to men in particular places and at particular times, and to those who were the subjects of an uncommon degree of depravity; and that it would be very unjust to understand them as descriptive of the character of the whole human race.

This objection can be obviated by considering the manner in which the subject is treated by writers in the New Testament. They refer to the account given in the Old Testament of the depravity of men in former times, as truly *descriptive of the character of the human race generally*. The prophet Isaiah said: "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" And in Isaiah 6, God said to the prophet; "Go, and tell this people; hear ye indeed but understand not, and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." In this commission God signified what was the character of the people to whom the prophet was sent, and pointed out the fearful effect which his ministry would have upon them. The words related, *primarily* and *directly* to those who were contemporary with the prophet Isaiah. But in the New Testament, these words are repeatedly quoted as descriptive of the character of *the Jews under the Gospel dispensation*. John 12: 37—40, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not; that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake; *Lord who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah saith again; *He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*" Thus the writer of the evangelical history took two passages, which described the stupidity and wickedness of the Jews at a former period, and applied them to his contemporaries. The Apostle Paul did the same in regard

Digitized by Google

to the Jews in Rome. In his final address to them, in order to make a deep impression of their guilt, he said; "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto your fathers;"—repeating the same words from Isaiah 6, with the manifest and cutting implication, that the words described *their* character, as well as the character of their fathers. In his epistle to Titus, Paul, in the same way, takes a passage from the poet Epimenides, and applies it to the Cretans of his day. "One of them, even a prophet of their own, said: *The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.* This witness is true: wherefore rebuke them sharply." The passage from the poet not only suggested that the Cretans were depraved, but that they were characterized from age to age by *particular forms* of depravity. But the example of the Apostle in Romans 3, is most directly in point. In making out the proof that all men are sinners, he enumerates the several forms of wickedness which had been exhibited by men in particular places, and at particular times. The argument is unquestionably good. And of course, it is just and proper for us to regard all the particular instances of wickedness which the history of any portion of mankind brings to view, as indicating what is *the character of the species.* In several of the Psalms, particularly the v, x, xiv, xxxvi, and xl, and in Isaiah lix, the writers described the sins which prevailed in their day. "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; they are all gone aside," etc. These passages, which originally described the Jewish character in times of great degeneracy, are used by the Apostle to set forth the character of the Jews in his day. But he entirely fails as to the great object of his reasoning, and the conclusion at which he arrives is false, if the passages he quotes from the Old Testament do not contain a substantially true account of the character of mankind universally in their natural state. For he adduces the passages for the very purpose of proving that all the world are guilty before God. It is a connected chain of reasoning; and unless the texts cited are, as to the substance of them, justly applicable to the whole race of man, the reasoning is without force, and the conclusion,

Digitized by Google

that all are guilty and in need of salvation by grace, is broader than the premises. But when depravity is thus predicated of all men alike, it by no means implies that all have the same *degree*, or exhibit the same *forms* of depravity. This was not the case even with those of whom the Psalmist and the prophet Isaiah originally spoke. The truth of the passages quoted, and the propriety of reasoning from them as the Apostle does, need not be supposed to imply more than this, namely, that all men in their natural state are unholy and disobedient, and so, as to wickedness of heart, are substantially alike; that they have *the same moral nature, the same wrong propensities, the same elements of moral evil;* and that the variety of characters existing among men is not to be accounted for by any essential difference as to moral nature, but by their different bodily constitutions, by the different circumstances in which they are placed, and the different influences under which they act.

It may possibly be thought that, as the passages quoted related to the Jewish nation in former times, the Apostle meant to apply them merely to those Jews *who had a similar character in his* time, and that it would be improper to consider them as a proof of universal depravity. I admit that the passages related primarily to Jews; but the Apostle shows that his argument was meant to have a wider range. His conclusion is, that "the whole world," whether Jews or Gentiles, are guilty, that is, *convicted of sin*, and so must look for justification by grace, not by works. I would not deny, that in coming to this conclusion he might refer to what he had said to the Gentiles in ch. 1, in connection with what he had said of the Jews in ch. 3. Nor would I deny that he might take it for granted, and as what would not be called in question by those to whom he wrote, that the Gentiles were as wicked as the Jews, and as worthy of the charges which he recited from the Old Testament. On this ground, his making good his charge against the *Jews* was, by obvious consequence, making it good against the *Gentiles*.

If any allege that the passages quoted were meant by the Apostle to be applied only to the *unbelieving* and *ungodly* part

Digitized by Google

of the Jewish nation; my reply is, that the Apostle's design was to show, that there is only one mode of acceptance with God, namely, by faith in Christ, in contradistinction to salvation by works. And was it not true of *believers*, as well as of others, that there was no way of justification for them except by grace? Had they not *been* sinners? And were they not sinners still? Does not the Apostle, in the next chapter, speak of Abraham and David, as those who were justified in the gratuitous way, that is, pardoned; — implying, that they were transgressors? So that what the Apostle here asserts of all men, is not to be limited to the unbelieving and ungodly, but is to be considered as justly applicable to all who were ever in a state of sin, that is, to the whole race of man, without exception; as he says, verse 23, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," — and so need the grace of the gospel.

There can be no reasonable doubt, therefore, that the passages quoted in Romans 3 from the Old Testament, are a true description of the character which, for substance, all men naturally possess. These passages show that, whatever may be the different forms of character among men, they all without exception agree in this, that they are sinners. And if these passages are to be regarded in this light; it is evidently proper that other similar passages should be regarded in the same light. Accordingly, the account given of the wickedness of the antediluvian world, and of particular portions of mankind in different ages, may be produced as a true exhibition of the natural character of man, a development, varied by circumstances, but *substantially* the same, of man's unrenewed heart. What if men, who are educated in a Christian land, and under the influence of Christian instruction, are free from the odious forms of vice described by the Apostle? Are they not "by nature children of wrath even as others?" In forming a correct judgment of their case, we pass by what is fair and lovely in their visible conduct; — we pass by all the diversities of their intellectual and social qualities, and fix our eye upon the moral affections of the heart. In these elements of evil all agree. And

Digitized by Google

although they have not, by formal outward acts, committed theft, murder, and idolatry, they all have in their unrenewed hearts what may be called the *principles* or *seeds* of these hateful vices. And admitting them to be alike in these original affections, we can satisfactorily account for all the varieties of character existing among them, by the influence of circumstances. Who can suppose that the different degrees of wickedness, and all the varieties of character among men, are to be traced back, to a difference in their moral nature, or their original moral dispositions? Nothing could be more unreasonable, or contrary to the word of God, than this. It is clearly suggested by common observation and experience, and especially by Scripture, that human nature, as to its grand moral features, is always the same; and that the wickedness committed in any age or country, is a real exhibition of what is in man as a species. Were it not so, the writings of historians, whether sacred or profane, would be of little use to us. We have been taught to regard it as one of the peculiar advantages of history, that it gives us lessons respecting human nature; that it makes us acquainted with what is in man, and so is calculated to profit us as individuals of the species. But of what advantage would history be to us, if it gave a description of the dispositions and actions of those who have no common nature with us, and to whom we bear no moral resemblance? On this supposition, why did the Apostle John refer to the conduct of Cain, for the purpose of counselling and warning those to whom he wrote? Why did the Apostle Paul say, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning?" And why did he bring into view the ingratitude, unbelief, murmuring, and obduracy of the Israelites in the wilderness, for the purpose of admonition to his contemporaries? Suppose men in former times *were* chargeable with various kinds of wickedness; what is that to us, if we have no tendency in our nature to the same wickedness? History has been regarded as a faithful mirror in which we may discern the features of our own character, even those which were before unobserved, and may learn the dangers against which we ought

Digitized by Google

to guard. But on the supposition above made, history could no longer be used for these important purposes, but must be considered merely as affording gratification to our curiosity. Nay more, those texts in which the sacred writers make the most general declarations respecting the sinfulness of man, must, on this supposition, be limited to those to whom the writers originally applied them. If they said "that which was born of the flesh is flesh," and that "they who are in the flesh cannot please God;" they must have said it of the carnal race of men who lived at that time; but it by no means proves that men at the present day are in this condition. If Christ declared that "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven," —and if the apostles spoke of Christians as actually renewed by the Divine Spirit; we cannot, upon this principle, consider such passages as intended to show what the natural state of man is, and what is necessary to the Christian character, at this period of superior light and refinement. Indeed, if the principle involved in the objection is correct, we cannot conclude that any Scripture *precept* is obligatory on us. For all the commands of God contained in the Bible, were given to men who lived in former times. And how can those commands, which were given to generations of men long since passed away, show what God requires of *us?* Those who were spoken to by Moses and the prophets, and by Christ and the apostles, were required to repent of sin, and to love God with all their hearts, and their neighbors as themselves. But when has the inspired teacher expressly said, that these requisitions related to men who should live in the nineteenth century? In fact, all parts of the Bible were addressed to men of other times and in other circumstances; and how can any of its doctrines be applicable to us? How can its precepts bind us? And how can its promises animate and comfort us? All the good which the sacred volume can now do, is to teach us what mankind were, and how God treated them in former times. To all these extremities should we be carried, if we should admit the supposition which we have been considering. For the principle which would free us

Digitized by Google

from the high charges of depravity and guilt found in the Bible, would authorize us to set aside all the other doctrines connected with that of human corruption, — would prove us to be free from the obligations of all the precepts of the Bible, and would entirely deprive us of its gracious and cheering promises. And so the sacred volume would be to us an antiquated, obsolete, and useless book.

It is maintained by all sober men, that the general instructions, the precepts and promises of God's word, relate to us as really as to those who lived in the time of the prophets and apostles. But on what principle are they to be so understood? How is it that we readily conclude, that all men now living are bound by the moral precepts contained in the Bible? — that wherever we find human beings, we feel it to be proper at once to address to them the offers and the promises of the Gospel, and to call upon them to repent and believe? It can be on no other principle than this; that as to all which is necessary to constitute accountable beings, and as to the essential qualities of moral character, all men are alike. This is a principle which we almost instinctively admit. Who doubts that human beings whom he meets for the first time, even if it be in the most distant part of the world, have the same rational and moral faculties with those men whom he has familiarly known; that they possess, and will, as occasion prompts, exhibit, self-love, pride, a disposition to resent injuries, and all the other moral affections which he is conscious of in himself, or has witnessed in others around him? And who does not feel it to be proper and necessary in all his intercourse with men, whether familiarly known to him or not, to act on the principle that they are subject to all the depraved affections which the inspired teachers charged upon the wicked world in their day? If a man should act on any other principle, he would be considered as deficient in the knowledge of human nature. And if any one should think his own heart free from that depravity which has misguided and ruined others, he would show that he is ignorant of himself.

This leads me to say, that the propriety of considering the

Digitized by Google

description of human sinfulness found in the Bible, as of universal application, is evident from the experience and consciousness of every sober, reflecting man. Let such a man read what the sacred writers affirm of the wickedness of individuals and of nations; and then look into his own heart, and ponder well the emotions which have been excited and the principles which have operated there; and must he not be satisfied that he has within him the elements of all that the apostles and prophets charged upon the wicked world? Nay, it will not be difficult for him to discover in himself some real moral resemblance to those who have been stigmatized by the most hateful vices.

I appeal to those who have been accustomed to look into their own hearts. You know a man who is guilty of a henious crime, — theft, adultery, or murder; and you know all the unpropitious circumstances of his case from early childhood; the wrong instruction he has received, the corrupting manners of his associates, the influence of wealth or poverty, of excessive indulgence, or irritating severity, which has operated upon him, — yea, the whole combination of hurtful causes by which his moral faculties have been perverted, and his heart prepared for acts of wickedness. Now had *you* been placed in the same circumstances, would you not have been likely to commit the same crimes? Have you not already, in many instances, done that which is as really contrary to the divine law? And have you not a painful consciousness of those unholy dispositions, which, had there been no influence to subdue or restrain them, and had they been elicited and strengthened by temptation, might have made you a Cain, a Pharaoh, a Saul, or a Judas? Are you not convinced that you have in yourself the elements of the same moral deformity, and that it is owing, not to the natural purity of your hearts, but to the influence of the Divine Spirit, or to the restraints of Divine Providence, that you are not actually numbered with the most vile and wretched of the human race?

3. I argue from those representations of Scripture which teach the depravity of all the human race *by manifest implication.*

Digitized by Google

Those passages which teach the necessity of regeneration, or which assert that the obedient and pious have been regenerated, clearly imply that all men are naturally in a depraved state. For, if any human being is not depraved, surely he does not need to be born again. He is holy and obedient without regeneration.

The first passage I shall quote is John 3: 1—7, containing the conversation of our Saviour with Nicodemus. The four thousand years which had passed away from the creation, had furnished abundant evidence of the natural character of man. A thorough experiment had been made of the disposition of the human heart in a great variety of circumstances. Commands and warnings, promises and threats, favors and judgments, displays of wonderful mercy and of tremendous wrath had been repeatedly tried. Jesus stood upon an eminence from which he witnessed the whole development which had been made of human nature, and all the affections of man's heart. And he proclaimed the grand result, the momentous truth which the history of all ages had taught, and which, without the history of past ages, was perfectly manifest to his heart-searching eye, when he said to Nicodemus; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" It is evident that the change here spoken of, is a moral or spiritual change; because it is to prepare men for a spiritual kingdom. And it is necessary for all mem, *Ἐάν μή τις*, — "Except *any one* be born again." No human being, who is not regenerated, can enjoy the blessedness of Christ's kingdom. And so it is most clearly implied, that every human being is in such a state of moral depravity, as renders him unfit for Christ's kingdom. To illustrate the necessity of a spiritual renovation, our Saviour added; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." This implies that the children of men are the subjects of such sinful propensities as render them incapable of holy enjoyment. And as this state of depravity is the direct and certain consequence of our natural birth, it of course belongs alike to all. The various places where the duty of repentance is enjoined or the necessity

Digitized by Google

of it asserted, imply the same doctrine. For how can repentance be regarded as the duty of men, or as necessary to their salvation, unless they are sinners?

The sinfulness of all mankind is implied in the work of redemption, particularly the death of Christ and the dispensation of the Spirit. The reasoning of the Apostle is, that "if Christ died for all, then were all dead," i. e., dead in sin. If any of our race were not sinners, they would need no atonement, and Christ's death could have no relation to them; for he is everywhere represented as having died for *sinners*, the just for the *unjust*. Redemption by the blood of Christ for those who are free from sin, would be totally incongruous. The same is true as to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is sent to convince men of sin, to quicken them, to make them holy, to shed abroad the love of God in their hearts. But what need of all this, nay, what place for it, in regard to those who are not sinners? Unless the heart is impure, what occasion is there for purification? Unless the mind is darkened by sin, what occasion for special divine illumination? And unless man in his natural state is depraved, what necessity is there of his being renewed by divine influence? If then there is any being who has no sin, he can have no concern with the special work of the Holy Spirit, and for him to ask for sanctifying influence, or for others to ask it for him, would be unreasonable and senseless.

The universality of sin is implied in the fact, that all men die. Death, including the dissolution of the body, is the penalty of the law. Natural death is a great and appalling evil, and when inflicted upon those who are the subjects of God's government, is a manifest token of his displeasure. If men had been perfectly obedient and holy, they would not have suffered death. This is fully confirmed by the Apostle, in Rom. 5: 12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and *death by sin;* and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Death came in as the result of sin, and extended as far as sin and no farther. The Apostle speaks, verse 14, of those who lived from Adam to Moses, and teaches that death reigned over

Digitized by Google

them also, and consequently that they were sinners, though they had not sinned in the same manner that Adam did. The reasoning of the Apostle is perfectly clear, and the conclusion certain: *Death befalls all men; therefore they are all sinners.*

In proof of the universality of sin among men, I might say, that the fact has been acknowledged by all nations; that the structure of civil laws and the administration of civil government have always proceeded on the principle of human corruption; and that no government, whether civil or domestic, would be fitted to its end, or have any prospect of success, if it should overlook human corruption. I might say too, that no man ever attempted in earnest to govern himself by the rules of right reason, without finding abundant and mortifying evidence of his own moral depravity, and that the further any one goes in the work of a just self-government, the clearer will he find the evidence of "a law in his members warring against the law of his mind," i. e., of a corrupt disposition of heart opposing his reason and conscience, and urging him to transgress the divine commands. The best men on earth have been sinners, and are the subjects of sin still. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXII.

DEPRAVITY OF MAN TOTAL.

HAVING shown that all men, without exception, are sinners, I shall next inquire, *what is the degree of sinfulness* which belongs to them in their unrenewed state.

This inquiry is distinct from the preceding. For the fact that all are sinners, does not necessarily imply that they are sinful in any particular degree, and certainly not that they are totally sinful. We well know that all who are renewed are still the subjects of sin, though they have a degree of holiness.

The *total* depravity of man in his natural state, is to be considered altogether as a matter of fact, and to be proved by appropriate evidence. But before entering on the proof of the doctrine that man in his natural state is *totally sinful*, it will be important to obtain a clear and correct idea of the meaning of the doctrine.

The doctrine respects man as a *moral* being, subject to a moral government; and accordingly the depravity predicated of him is a *moral* depravity. And it is to be farther remarked that *moral*, in relation to this subject, is used in its highest sense. The word is not unfrequently applied to those affections which pertain to our domestic and social relations, and to the conduct which those affections prompt. Such affections, generally called natural affections, may in a secondary sense be regarded as of a moral nature. They possess a far higher excellence than the animal appetites, and more directly involve our moral interests. But the word *moral*, as commonly and more properly used with

Digitized by Google

regard to the present subject, respects the high standard of God's moral law, the sum of which is, *to love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.* So far as we are wanting in this affection for God and our fellow men, and so far as we have an affection of a contrary kind, we are morally depraved. And if we are *entirely* destitute of the holy love required by God's law, and if all the affections we have in relation to that law are of an opposite nature, then we are *totally depraved.*

According to this view of the subject, the objection most frequently urged against the doctrine of total depravity is manifestly without force. To disprove the doctrine, the objector alleges that men in general possess many amiable and useful qualities, and that very few go to that degree of wickedness which they are capable of reaching. We acknowledge the facts alleged, but deny that they are of any weight in opposition to the doctrine. The simple question is, whether a moderate degree of wickedness, and the existence of the amiable and useful qualities referred to, may consist with the entire absence of that holy love which God's law demands, and with the predominance of an opposite affection. If they may, then the facts alleged by the objector afford no conclusive argument against the doctrine of total depravity. For the doctrine, properly explained, affirms only that man in his natural state has no holiness, and that his affections are wrong so far as they relate to the high standard of God's holy law. The doctrine admits that man without regeneration may possess a great variety of dispositions and susceptibilities and perform a great variety of actions, which are in themselves innocent and important, — which are indeed what they ought to be, so far as they have respect merely to his domestic and social relations. But the doctrine asserts that, notwithstanding all these harmless and useful dispositions, unrenewed man has no holiness and is the subject of total moral depravity. And if any one thinks it best to use the word *moral* in the lower sense, and to say, that the amiable natural affections above mentioned are morally good; it is sufficient for us to say, that in regard to this subject we are accustomed to use the word *moral* in a different sense.

Digitized by Google

It may perhaps appear strange and almost incredible to some, that so many estimable and lovely qualities should be found in those who are entirely without love to God. But it is a well known fact, that a high degree of domestic and social affection is often found in those who are very far removed from religious principle. Besides, the natural affections manifestly relate to a different standard, have a different nature, and are designed for different purposes, from religious affection. They may therefore exist where this higher affection is wanting. That *spiritual, holy* love which God's law requires us to exercise towards our fellow men, does indeed imply the existence of love to God; and love to God implies love to men. It does so, because the affection in both instances is of the same nature, and the exercise of it in both instances indicates the same state of mind. Accordingly the second command is *like* to the first, and every one who loves his brother as the law requires, loves God also. But it is not so with the natural affections. We cannot say that every parent who has a tender natural affection for his offspring, has a holy affection for God; or that every one who has a heart to sympathize with the afflicted, has a heart to feel for the interests of Christ's kingdom. The natural affections and sympathies have no more necessary connection with holiness, than the animal appetites; and it is as really contrary to fact, to say, *he that has mere natural affection, loves God*, as to say, he *that has the appetite of hunger, loves God.* Our Saviour taught the same truth. To a youth, who possessed amiable sensibilities, attractive manners, and a fair character in the world's view, he said; "One thing thou lackest;" and that one thing was *supreme love to God.* That lovely youth idolized the world.

It is well known, that we are as ready as those who entertain the laxest views of religion, to acknowledge the beauty and utility of those domestic and social qualities which are often found in the unregenerate. But we are admonished by the word of God and by common observation not to put them in the place of religion.

The proof of the doctrine of total depravity is found in the

Digitized by Google

representations of Scripture and in the consciousness of enlightened Christians.

There is indeed no text which affirms in so many words that *all men in their natural state are totally sinful.* But there are many texts which clearly imply this. Christ said to the unbelieving Jews; "I know that ye have not the love of God in you;" and he even charged them with being enemies to God.

All unbelievers, by not receiving Christ, give the same evidence of disaffection to God, as the unbelieving Jews did. And as it is a plain doctrine of the Bible that no one believes in Christ unless he is born of God, it follows that all the unrenewed have a heart to reject Christ, and of course that they are without love to God.

In accordance with this the Apostle says; "The carnal mind is enmity against God." By comparing this passage with John 3: 6, we learn that the carnal or fleshly mind is that which we have naturally. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." And as the carnal mind is thus the certain consequence of our natural birth, it of course belongs to all men. The only question is, whether the enmity implied in the carnal mind, is entirely exclusive of love. And of this there can be no reasonable doubt, as the Apostle says without qualification, that they who have the carnal mind, are in such a state that they cannot be subject to the law of God, and cannot please God; which would not be the case, if they had any degree of holy love.

The representation often made in Scripture that unconverted men are *dead in sin*, fairly implies that they are destitute of holiness. For holiness is spiritual life. And if unrenewed sinners had any degree of this, they could hardly be said to be dead, and dead too in such a sense that they need to be quickened or made alive by supernatural power, according to the representation in Ephesians 2.

This leads me to say, that *the necessity* of *rengeneration*, as asserted by our Saviour, (John 3,) is an obvious proof of man's total depravity. "Ye must be born again." "Except a man, (except *any one*) be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of

Digitized by Google

heaven." Why is such a change universally necessary, if men in their natural state have any degree of holiness? The Bible promises heaven to those who have holiness, or love to Christ, in any degree. Even one who gives a cup of cold water to Christ's disciples from a right motive, has the promise of a future reward. The existence of holiness in man is in Scripture attributed to *the renewing of the Holy Ghost.* In all its branches and in all its degrees, it is *the fruit of the Spirit.* It is perfectly obvious then that man, in his natural, unrenewed state, is wholly destitute of holiness, and that his moral affections are all sinful.

In support of this doctrine I might urge the failure of the most powerful motives to induce unrenewed man to turn from sin and believe in Christ. When the persuasive considerations of the Gospel are clearly presented before the mind of a sinner, they would certainly influence him to the exercise of penitence, faith, and love, if he had any degree of moral rectitude. What could be a more decisive proof that his moral nature is entirely perverted, than the fact that, when the amiable and glorious character of Christ is held up before him, it excites no love; that when the condescending kindness and grace of God are described to him, he feels no gratitude; and that he renders no cordial obedience to that law which is holy, just, and good? What greater evidence of man's total moral corruption could there be than this, that he is not persuaded to forsake sin and follow Christ, either by the threat of eternal misery, or the offer of eternal blessedness?

I appeal for proof, finally, to the experience and consciousness of the enlightened Christian. When he reflects upon the exercises of his own heart, and compares them with the demands of God's perfect law, he is satisfied that in him, naturally, there was no good thing, that he was wholly alienated from God, and that the first existence of holy affection in his heart was the fruit of regenerating grace. And he is equally satisfied that he is still dependent and must continue to be dependent for all holy affections, upon the sanctifying influence of God's Spirit; and

Digitized by Google

that, if the Holy Spirit should be wholly taken from him, he would sink at once into a state of entire moral pollution. If any Christian affirms that he had any holy affections, or performed any holy actions, in his natural state, it must be because he uses words in a very vague sense, or because he has not properly reflected on the nature of that divine law which is the standard of holiness.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXIII.

NATIVE DEPRAVITY. EXPLANATION OF TERMS. MARKS OF OTHER THINGS WHICH ARE NATIVE. THESE MARKS PROVE NATIVE DEPRAVITY.

HAVING considered the depravity of man as *universal* and as *total*, I now proceed to inquire whether it is *native*.

The doctrine of man's *native depravity* has been held by all orthodox churches in Europe and America, both Lutheran and Calvinistic. It is contained in all their creeds. It is distinctly asserted even in the creed of Arminius. It is a prominent article in the only public confession of faith ever adopted by the Congregational churches in New England, and by the Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed churches in America. It is maintained also by the Episcopalians, the Methodists, and the Baptists, and also by the Catholics. The opposite doctrine has been held by no respectable society of men in Christendom, except Pelagians and Socinians. Among those who profess to maintain the substance of evangelical truth at the present day, there are a few individuals who set aside the common doctrine of native depravity; but they are not so much as one to a thousand of those ministers and intelligent Christians who unhesitatingly believe the doctrine. And yet some of those few individuals, though they still profess to adopt the common orthodox creeds, represent the doctrine of *native depravity* as a doctrine which was bred in an age of ignorance and superstition, and as destined to vanish with other forms of ancient error. Yea, they sometimes speak of it as though it had already past away from the minds

Digitized by Google

of all enlightened Christians. And I am sorry to add, that instances are not wanting in which professedly orthodox men treat the doctrine with ridicule and scorn. Whether all this is just and proper, and indicative of a becoming state of mind, I leave to the judgment of others. We must indeed acknowledge that the great body of Christians, being uninspired, have been and still are liable to error; and their opinions have no authority to bind our faith. The word of God is our only sure guide. This divine word we must examine for ourselves. And in present circumstances it is important that we should examine it with special care, guarding against prejudice, opening our hearts to conviction, keeping our minds candid and patient and our feelings unruffled, and looking continually to God for the guidance of his Spirit. And if we would be established in the truth and secure the benefits of Christian faith, we must resolutely avoid the pernicious habit of ruminating perpetually on objections and difficulties, and must give our undivided attention to the evidence which supports the truth.

To avoid ambiguity, and to prepare the way for a fair investigation of the subject, I shall briefly explain the terms commonly employed in relation to it.

The word *depravity*, relating as it here does to man's *moral* character, means the same as *sinfulness*, being the opposite of moral purity or *holiness*. In this use of the word there is a general agreement. But what is the meaning of *native* or *natural*! Among the variety of meanings specified by Johnson, Webster, and others, I refer to the following, as relating particularly to the subject before us.

"*Native. Produced by nature. Natural, or such as is according to nature; belonging by birth; original.*" *Natural* has substantially the same meaning: "produced by nature; not acquired." So Crabbe. "Of a person we say, his worth is *native*, to designate it as some valuable property *born with him*, not foreign to him or ingrafted upon him; but we say of his disposition, that it is natural, as opposed to that which is acquired by habit." And Johnson defines *nature* to be "*the native state*

Digitized by Google

or properties of anything, by which it is discriminated from others." He quotes the definition of Boyle; "Nature sometimes means what belongs to a living creature *at its nativity*, or accrues to it *by its birth*, as when we say a man is *noble by nature*, or a child is *naturally forward*. "This," he says, "may be expressed by saying, *the man was born so*."

After these brief definitions, which come to nearly the same thing, I proceed to inquire, *what are the marks or evidences which show anything in man to be natural or native; and how far these marks are found in relation to depravity.*

What then are the evidences that anything belonging to man is *natural* or *native?* What are the circumstances which mark that which is so? There will be some evident advantages in pursuing this inquiry, in the first place, in relation to those things concerning which our minds cannot be subject to any prepossession, or wrong bias. Having the advantage of an impartial, candid state of mind, we shall be likely to arrive at a just conclusion. And then we can apply the same reasoning, and bring the same impartial state of mind, to the subject before us, and so have the same prospect of coming to an equally just conclusion.

1. One of the marks which we should expect would belong to a native attribute or quality of man, is *its universality*. There are indeed characteristics of particular individuals or families, which we consider to be native, although they are not found in men generally. But if we say that any attribute *naturally* belongs to man, as a species, or that it belongs to *human nature*, it would seem to be implied that it is universal, unless some special change occurs in individuals touching that particular attribute.

Thus we consider *memory* to be a natural attribute of the human mind, as is universally found in man, except in those instances in which its operation is prevented by some disorder.

It is a circumstance especially in favor of supposing that a particular attribute is natural to man, if *it is not only found in all men of the present generation, but has been found in all the*

Digitized by Google

individuals of the human race from generation to generation in times past. This would show clearly, that the attribute intended does not arise from any particular causes which operate at one time or in one part of the world more than another, but from a cause which affects all alike; that it belongs to the very nature of man, or certainly results from it, so that wherever human nature exists, there this attribute will exist.

2. Another circumstance showing a particular attribute to be natural to man is, *its developing itself in early life.* If any thing begins to manifest itself very early; if without exception it comes out in visible operations and fruits as soon as the bodily and mental powers of individuals render them capable of such operations; in other words, if it is developed as early as there is opportunity or capacity for its development; we consider this as a proof that it is natural to man, that it is a *native quality.*

3. It is a circumstance which affords additional proof that a particular attribute or quality is natural to man, *if it is evident that it is not owing to any change which takes place in him subsequently to his birth.* Should we be able to trace the particular thing which is early exhibited by any individual, to a change which occurred in him still earlier; we should consider it as attributable to that change, or perhaps more properly, to the particular cause from which the change resulted. But if there is no reason to suppose any such change previous to the development of the particular thing under consideration, we of course regard it as natural.

4. Another circumstance which generally marks an attribute which is natural to man, is, *its operating freely and spontaneously.* This may indeed be found to belong to some things which are not natural. But we expect that a principle or disposition which is natural to man, will operate with freedom; that when a fair occasion comes, it will show itself spontaneously.

5. That which is natural to man is generally *hard to be resisted and overcome.* This is the case with all those affections which are usually called natural. They are deeply rooted in man's nature; and no ordinary means are sufficient to eradicate or sub-

Digitized by Google

due them. Accordingly when we find it so with any particular thing, we regard it as a mark of its being natural; although the same is true of some of those habits or propensities which are acquired.

6. There is one more mark of what is natural to man, which, though not essentially different from the preceding, may be distinctly considered, namely, *that we can predict with certainty that it will in due time act itself out.* This we are able to do in regard to every native principle or quality in man. But if any attribute of man, instead of being natural, depends on external circumstances which may belong to some individuals and not to others, how can we be sure that it will ever show itself or have existence in mankind generally?

I might mention other marks of what is natural to man, but these are the most obvious and important. If now we examine any thing, whether bodily or mental, which we consider as natural to man, we shall find it has these or most of these marks, and that we have no other way of proving it to be natural but by referring to these very marks. How do we prove the bodily appetites or senses to be natural? How do we prove the faculties and propensities of the mind, such as reason, will, memory, conscience, parental love, sympathy and gratitude to be natural? We have no better evidence and no other evidence than this, that these things are found universally to exist in mankind, except in cases where some extraordinary cause has operated to produce an exception; that they show themselves very early, or at farthest as soon as circumstances exist which are suited to call them forth; that they are evidently not owing to any essential change which takes place in man's nature after his birth; that they are found to operate spontaneously; that they are hard to be resisted and subdued; and that it is manifestly certain that every human being who comes into the world will in due time exhibit them, unless some extraordinary cause interposes to prevent. That the bodily senses and appetites are natural to man, no one doubts. Nor is there any more doubt as to the leading attributes of the mind. Who does not admit that reason and moral sense and memory and

Digitized by Google

sympathy and love of offspring are as natural to man, that they as really appertain to the nature which man possesses, as the bodily senses? The corporeal and the mental attributes of man, are indeed brought into visible action at different periods, some at the very commencement of life and others afterwards. But this makes no difference in our judgment on the present subject. We always consider the sense of seeing, hearing, and tasting as native properties of man; and we should consider them in the same light, if they were first exercised at a much later period than is common. So it is with reason, memory, conscience, and parental affection. They do not develop themselvss at the commencement of life. The new born child does not immediately show reason, or memory, or conscience. And that love to offspring which is by way of eminence called *natural affection*, hardly begins to rise in the mind and to act itself out, before the parental relation exists. The faculty of speech, which is natural to man in distinction from the brutal species, waits for its development till the bodily organs and the mental faculties have acquired the necessary strength and activity; and then it develops itself very gradually, beginning with broken, defective expressions, and proceeding slowly to a perfect language.

These remarks prepare the way for a proper view of the subject of depravity. For if this has all the marks belonging to other things which are acknowledged to be natural to man, why should it not be considered in the same light? The question then is; *has it the same marks?* Are there as many and as strong reasons for considering man's sinfulness to be natural, as for considering any of his other attributes to be so? In my apprehension there are.

In the first place, moral depravity, as we have already seen, is *universal*. It extends through the whole species. All are sinners. We can no more find those who are free from depravity, than we can find those who are without reason, or memory, or social affection, or bodily appetites.

Secondly. Depravity *shows itself very early*. As soon as children acquire such strength of body and mind, as to be capable of unfolding their true character, they show that they are depraved.

Digitized by Google

As soon as they manifest any moral feelings, they manifest those which are sinful. Among the earliest things which we can observe in others, or recollect in ourselves, we find the indications and incipient exercises of wrong affection. This then has the same mark of belonging naturally and originally to man, as any thing else which begins to act itself out in early life.

Thirdly. The sinfulness which thus early shows itself in man, *cannot be traced to any antecedent change in his character*. Were it owing to such a change, it could not with propriety be called natural, however early it might appear. Suppose any disorder or defect of mind, for example, idiocy, shows itself very early in a child; yet if it can be traced to any injury or bodily distemper which occurred after birth, we never speak of it as native. But if there has been no such calamity; if without any injury or any bodily distemper occurring subsequently to his birth, the child shows uniformly, as soon as he shows any thing, that he is wanting in the power of understanding; then we consider his idiocy as natural. We say, *he was born an idiot*. Now what is the fact in regard to our moral depravity? Does it result from any previous *change* in our moral nature? If there is such a change, it must evidently take place very early in life; because the sinfulness which is here supposed to result from it, shows itself as soon as children are capable of manifesting what is in their hearts by intelligible signs. The change supposed must also be universal. At the very dawn of existence, even before any *distinct* and *visible* exercise of reason, it must take place in the nature of every human being. Is there any proof that this is the case? Is the supposition one which any reasonable man will admit? And would not such a supposition, if admitted, be attended with all the difficulties which attend the common doctrine, and with others in addition?

There is then no conclusion left for us but this, that as moral depravity shows itself at so early a period in human life, and as there is no reason to think that it results from any change in man subsequent to his birth, it must belong to his original disposition, and is justly considered to be *native*.

Digitized by Google

Fourthly. The moral depravity of man *operates spontaneously.* Like the other natural principles, it acts itself out freely as soon as the faculties of body and mind are sufficient, and objects of moral feeling are presented. Hard labor is not necessary to produce sinfulness in man, nor is great urgency of motives necessary to call it forth into action. Just as soon as an occasion offers, it rises to view of its own accord. Instead of waiting for pressing solicitation, it seems to have an inward force which can hardly brook restraint, and is impatient to break forth into action almost without occasion. How soon does moral evil in some form show itself! How readily does the feeling of pride or selfishness or ill-will come out to view in the looks and words and actions of little children! It waits not to be elicited by overpowering inducements, or to be produced by long, laborious effort. It is not like the useful vegetable, which will not spring up and grow unless it is planted and cultivated; but like the useless weeds, which are natural to the soil, and spring up and grow spontaneously, yea in spite of all our efforts to prevent. Sinful affection takes possession of the minds of children before they are aware. It becomes active and predominant in them before they deliberately inquire into its nature; and so they first become distinctly acquainted with its turpitude by experiencing its operation in their own hearts. And this spontaneous putting forth of the energy of the soul in moral evil is characteristic, not only of early childhood, but of every period of life. And it belongs to human depravity as much as to any of those propensities, whether corporeal or mental, which are universally allowed to be natural.

Fifthly. Human depravity has also the next mark above mentioned of belonging to what is natural; namely, *its being overcome with great difficulty.* The enlightened and pious parent is aware of the strong and early propensity of his children to evil. He makes use of all possible means to restrain and subdue that propensity; but it breaks through all restraints. And even when he succeeds in preventing his children from exhibiting their depravity in gross outward acts of wickedness, it still maintains its dominion in their hearts, and gives character to all their affections.

Digitized by Google

But in this respect the Christian's own experience furnishes more striking proof than any observation he makes upon others, that sin is no superficial, accidental thing; that it is deep-rooted in his nature: that it is, as it has generally been called, *inbred;* that it makes a part of himself ; that opposing it is opposing his own natural disposition ; and that getting rid of it is cutting off a right hand or plucking out a right eye. He often finds that the most resolute resistance which he can make against the evil bias of his heart is unsuccessful ; that all the strength which he can array against it has no effect, but to make its superior power more conspicuous. And he well knows that no motive which can be brought to bear upon the mind of an unrenewed man, will ever prevail to subdue his earthly, selfish affection, and excite him to love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ; and he is convinced that no power can accomplish this, except the new-creating power of the Holy Spirit.

Sixthly. That which I have adverted to as the last circumstance attending what is natural in man, is not here introduced as anything essentially different from the particulars before mentioned, but rather as what results from them. The circumstance is this, and how remarkable a circumstance it is! — that *we can predict with certainty, that every human being, as soon as he acts out his moral nature, will commit sin.* We fix our eyes upon a new born child, now incapable of exhibiting any of the signs of rational and moral existence; but we can certainly predict that as soon as he comes to be capable of intelligent and responsible action, he will be a sinner. We do not speak of it as a conjecture or a probability, but a certainty. We are sure that no precautions, no happy combination of circumstances will prevent this dreadful result. Suppose a child to be, from the first, placed under the care of parents and teachers who are among the wisest and holiest of mankind, so that he hears nothing from their lips but words of truth and wisdom, purity and love, and sees no conduct in them which is not marked with excellence throughout. He is watchfully guarded against whatever would corrupt him or lead him astray, and is, with the utmost solicitude, placed under those influences which tend to enlighten the understanding, to

Digitized by Google

direct and strengthen conscience, and to excite good affections. May it not be that this child, living in such circumstances, and trained up under such salutary influences, will escape the fatal contagion and be pure from sin? If ten thousand children, yea if all the children on the face of the earth, should be placed in such circumstances, and should be trained up in the wisest, purest, holiest manner; may it not be that some of them would have a character free from moral evil? The answer must be, "no, not one." Now how could we confidently and certainly predict that all human beings, in all circumstances, continuing unchanged by divine grace, will sin against God, were there not some ground of this certainty in the moral nature of man? It is agreed that no outward circumstances, no influences however favorable, which can be brought to bear upon the minds of men, will ever, in a single instance, guard them against the pollution of sin, without the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The evil then cannot be supposed to originate in any unfavorable circumstances, such as corrupting examples, or insinuating and strong temptations; for if these were entirely removed, all human beings would still be sinners. With such a moral nature as they now have, they would not wait for strong temptations to sin. Nay, they would be sinners in opposition to the strongest motives to the contrary. We know indeed that human beings will turn those very motives which most powerfully urge to holiness, into occasions of sin. Now does not the confidence and certainty with which we foretell the commission of sin, and of sin unmixed with moral purity, presuppose a full conviction in us, and a conviction resting upon what we regard as satisfactory evidence, that sin, in all its visible actings, arises from that which is within the mind itself, and which belongs to our very nature as moral beings? Have we not as much evidence that this is the case in regard to moral evil, as in regard to any of our natural affections or bodily appetites? It should be kept in mind that the prediction of future sin, as above described, does not imply, that we have a particular insight into the mind of any individual child. It is sufficient that we know the child to belong to our species. The

Digitized by Google

fact that he is *human* is the ground of our prediction. We know it to be a *law of our fallen nature*, or, if any prefer it, I will say, we know *our moral state to be such*, that every one of our species, whether now born, or to be born, *will be a sinner; and that he will be a sinner wholly and forever, unless he is created anew by the Holy Spirit.* And we know and predict this on the same general principle on which we predict any fact as the result of the known laws of the moral or material world. There are doubtless laws as settled and uniform, a connection of causes and effects as certain in the moral world, as in the physical world. Nor will this view of the subject expose us to any difficulty in regard to our responsibility or free agency, if we remember that the causes which operate in the moral world correspond to the nature of the mind, while the causes which operate in the physical world correspond to the nature of material substances; and that the influence of causes, though in both cases equally uniform and certain, is in one case as different from what it is in the other, as the nature of mind is different from the nature of matter.

Now if there were no such invariable law as that above mentioned, no such steady, uniform principle operating in the human mind in its present fallen state; how could we certainly conclude that every descendant of Adam will be a sinner, however many external motives and influences may combine to prevent it? Can it be imagined that a rational and moral being will certainly and constantly resist the strongest motives which act upon him from without and from within, under the glorious dispensation of the Gospel, and rush into transgression, *without any cause?* Nay, must there not be a cause of astonishing power, to account for it that he should, even in the most favorable circumstances, uniformly be a sinner, and a sinner wholly and forever, unless he is created anew by the Holy Ghost? Surely that is a most deplorable state into which man's natural birth brings him, and a most fearful internal principle under the influence of which his natural birth leaves him. "That which is born of the flesh is *flesh*." And, according to the Apostle, the fruit of the flesh is *sin* in all its various forms.

Digitized by Google

In opposition to the general course of reasoning here exhibited, it is sometimes said, that Adam, without any original corruption of his nature, was exposed to sin, and did actually commit sin; and therefore that the occurrence of sin in moral beings is no certain proof of a preceding corruption of nature.

In reply to this, I would first recommend the remarks of Edwards on this point in answer to John Taylor, as worthy of special regard. See his work on Original Sin, Part 1, ch. 1. Sect. 9.

Secondly. Allowing it to be *possible* that all men would sin without any inherent, natural corruption, we still ask, whether it is *probable*. Is it a fact, that men go into the commission of crimes, without anything faulty in their previous dispositions? Does observation, and does our own consciousness teach this? It is certainly most natural and satisfactory in all ordinary cases, to refer the conduct of men to their disposition, or moral state. What is more common than to trace lying, stealing and murder to a false, thievish and murderous disposition? We account for it that they commit such crimes by the existence of such a disposition. And no one ever doubts that the disposition exists, if the crimes are committed. The latter is always regarded as a proof of the former.

Such is the mode of thinking and judging which commonly prevails among men; and such doubtless it will be, so long as human nature remains as it is. And we infer men's disposition or state of mind from their conduct, with special confidence, when their conduct is uniform and strongly marked. If any one denies this inference to be just in relation to the posterity of Adam, and maintains that the fact of their uniformly sinning can be accounted for without supposing anything amiss in their disposition; he sets aside a principle which, in other cases, is fully admitted. And why does he set it aside here, more than in other cases commonly occurring? Why here especially, where the actions denoting the disposition are so uniform, uninterrupted, and unmixed? It would seem to be at least as agreeable to the

Digitized by Google

common rules of judging, to say that the deliberate and habitual practice of theft and fraud does not prove a thievish and fraudulent disposition, as to say that the fact of men's universally sinning does not prove them to be the subjects of a sinful disposition. Nor can I see the reason why any one should take this position, except it be out of respect to a fovorite hypothesis, or because he finds the common theory exposed to certain speculative objections. That objections of such a kind should not be permitted to influence our belief in matters of fact, or in matters of revelation, has, I apprehend, been made sufficiently clear.

But if, after all, any one doubts the propriety of inferring from men's sinful conduct an original sinful disposition or corruption of nature, and asks whether it is not possible to account for their sinful conduct without supposing any such antecedent corruption; I will endeavor to satisfy him in the sequel, by proving the existence of such an original corruption of human nature from the holy Scriptures. If this original corruption is thus satisfactorily proved, no one can deny that it directly leads to actual sin, just as any particular disposition, say avarice or revenge, existing in a man, leads to a corresponding conduct; and no one can deny that actual sin directly proceeds from such a corrupt disposition, and is a clear development of it.

That Adam commenced his existence in a state of moral purity, or with a disposition to love and obey God, is generally allowed. That his posterity commence their existence in a moral state materially different from what his originally was, and from what theirs would have been had not he apostatized, is made as certain as language can make it, by the fifth chapter of Romans, and by other passages of holy writ.

If such is the principle we are taught by the word of God, and such our natural conclusion from the invariable conduct of Adam's posterity; and if we can satisfactorily account for their sinful conduct by the admission of a corrupt disposition in them; any one who rejects this commonly received principle, ought to be sure that he has a good reason for so doing, and that

Digitized by Google

there is another view of the subject more conformable to the Scriptures, and to the facts of our own experience. It will not answer the purpose to argue from the case of Adam; as it is easy to reply to such an argument, that there may have been something peculiar in his case, which would render it improper to reason concerning it as we do concerning the case of mankind generally in their present fallen state. There is this difference at least, that while Adam's sinning evidently implied a change in the state of his mind from what it originally was; the sinning of his posterity does not imply any change from their original, native character. *They* are born in *sin; he* was created *holy. Their* first moral state is *sinful; his* was *sinless.* And if his sinning implied a *change* of character, it could not result from his *original* character. But in his posterity, sinning does not imply a change in their moral state or character, but is the result of the state in which they are born. The question here is a question of fact, not a question as to what is possible.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF NATIVE DEPRAVITY CONTINUED. SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE. CONSEQUENCES OF DENYING THE DOCTRINE.

In discussing the subject of native depravity, I have proceeded thus far, without any direct appeal to the word of God. I have inquired, first, what particular marks distinguish those things which are generally allowed to be natural to man. I have specified these marks, and have shown that they appertain to our depravity. By this course of reasoning it has been my object to show, that we have as many and as powerful reasons to consider depravity a native attribute or quality of man, as most of those things which are generally acknowledged to be native. These reasons have satisfied men of enlightend, sober minds in the Christian and even in the heathen world. And why should they not satisfy *us?* What should hinder us from acknowledging our sinfulness to be natural, when we have such a variety of proofs that it is so, and proofs which in every other case are considered as perfectly convincing? Why should the same evidence which is received as satisfactory in one case, be rejected in the other?

The way seems now prepared for a just and satisfactory consideration of the Scripture evidence. As we have already seen that so many reasons exist for believing the doctrine of native depravity, no one can properly come to the word of God with a prepossession against it. If any prepossession is proper, it is a prepossession in favor of the doctrine.

But I only ask that those who inquire what the Bible teaches

Digitized by Google

on this subject, would free their minds from prejudice; that they would hold themselves ready to receive what the sacred writers teach; that they would interpret the Scriptures here as they do in other cases, without the influence of any preconceived opinion, or the influence of any speculative difficulties which may be supposed to attend the common doctrine.

The first passage which I shall produce is Rom. 5: 12—19. It is far from my design to consider the various difficulties attending the explanation of this passage, or to enter into the controversies which have grown out of it. There are several truths which are here taught with great clearness, and without the admission of which the reasoning of the Apostle would be inconclusive, and the effort he makes to magnify the grace of God in redemption, totally nugatory.

It is evident that the Apostle mentions the connection which the sin of Adam had with the state of his posterity, *as a matter well understood.* He brings it forward, not as a doctrine which is now for the first time to be declared, but for the purpose of making out a forcible illustration of another subject; i. e., the abounding grace of God in the salvation of his people. The manner in which the Apostle accomplishes this design, implies a fixed and very close connection between Adam and the whole race of mankind; a connection of such a kind, that his transgression involved them in great and dreadful evils. These evils are described in a variety of expressions. "By the offence of one the many *died.*" "The sentence was by one offence unto *condemnation.*" "By the offence of one, *death reigned.*" "By one offence the sentence came upon all men unto *condemnation.*" "By the disobedience of one man the many were *constituted sinners.*" Now if by these expressions, so strong and so often repeated, the Apostle did not mean to teach that the sin of Adam brought ruin upon his posterity; then with what propriety does he refer to this case as an illustration of the blessings which Christ procured for his people? And if death and condemnation come upon the posterity of Adam *by his offence*, or *in consequence of his transgression*, it would seem plainly to follow, even if it

Digitized by Google

were not so expressly asserted, that *all the individuals of the human race are involved in those evils*, seeing they all stand in the same relation to him. So that if we look upon any who are *the posterity of Adam*, we look upon those on whom death and condemnation come by his offence. There can be no exception. As to any of the posterity of Adam, and as to any to whom the benefits of Christ's death can be applied, this passage makes it evident, that they are among those who were brought into a state of condemnation and death by the "one offence." The question to which I would now ask your attention, is, whether the evils which are the consequence of Adam's offence, come upon any *who are, in every sense, really and entirely sinless, and who are so regarded by the divine government.*

The proper answer to this question will be made apparent by the following considerations.

First. It is represented in this passage, that one of the consequences of Adam's sin is, that all men are "constituted *sinners*." And in another part it is taught that death comes upon all men for the very reason, that "all have sinned." Though "death," or "the sentence of condemnation," comes upon all by Adam's offence, as the original and general cause; still it may not come upon them without involving their own personal sinfulness. It is said, that the children of Israel suffered the judgments of heaven from generation to generation "for the sin of Jeroboam," — this having been *the more distant and general* cause which brought those judgments upon them, while their sufferings were to be traced to *their own wickedness* as the *immediate* cause. The sin of Jeroboam affected them *primarily* by corrupting their minds and leading them into sin; and *consequently*, by bringing just punishments upon them from the hand of God. The cases are not in all respects parallel. But this at least is clear, that when the Apostle says, "death," or "the sentence of condemnation," came upon all men by the "offence of Adam," there is good reason to understand him as including their own personal sinfulness. Why may we not believe that the natural evil which comes upon the human race,

Digitized by Google

has a connection *both with Adam's sin, and their own?* Why may it not have resulted from his sins as a general and distant cause, and still have a more immediate relation to their own sinfulness? Why may it not have been related to both, though in different ways? Nothing is more common than the relation of one thing to two or more other things in different respects and in different degrees? The conclusion then which seems to be the most natural and obvious is, that Adam's sin does not bring death and condemnation upon his posterity, *they being sinless;* that none of them suffer penal evil in consequence of his sin, *without being, in some sense, sinful themselves*, it being expressly declared to be one of the effects of his offence, *that they are all constituted sinners.*

Secondly. Many other passages of Scripture teach that the evils which come upon mankind, respect them not as innocent and pure, but *as sinners.* When the prophet Ezekiel declares, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, it would seem to be his object to guard against the idea, that men suffer for the sin of others while they themselves are free from ill-desert. The real meaning of the complaint made by the children of Israel was, that on account of their father's wickedness they suffered what they themselves did not deserve. The prophet corrects this mistake, by telling them that punishment follows personal ill-desert. But surely he does not mean to contradict the declaration which God himself had made, that he would visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation;—a principle so important, that God appended it to the second command in the decalogue, and wrote it on a table of stone. Notwithstanding this general principle of the divine government, it is often represented in Scripture that it is the soul which sinneth that shall die,—that the wages of sin is death; sin and death belonging to the same subject.

Thirdly. It seems difficult to reconcile it with the justice and equity of God, as moral Governor, that he should visit the evils implied in "death" and "condemnation," upon any who are,

Digitized by Google

in their own personal character, wholly free from moral evil. The divine law connects the death and condemnation of men with their own sinfulness; and it connects their happiness with their obedience. Now it would be unreasonable to suppose that there is anything in the divine constitution or the divine conduct, which tends in the least to subvert or contravene this grand principle of moral government. Whatever may be said as to the sufferings of the brutal species, it is certainly the case that when pain is inflicted by the Governor of the world upon those whom he has made intelligent and moral beings, and placed by the very constitution of their nature under his moral government, our impression naturally is, that the infliction indicates divine displeasure, and so implies that he sees sinfulness and ill-desert in those who suffer. Unless therefore there is some evidence from Scripture which plainly opposes this impression, we must conclude that among intelligent, moral beings, sin is in some form co-extensive with suffering.

The application of this principle to the case of children will be more particularly considered before closing the discussion. My present object is to show that the Apostle in Rom. 5: 12—19, meant among other things to teach, that man is really, in a very important sense, depraved or degenerate, from the commencement of his existence; that he is born in sin; that the uniform consequence of his natural birth is, not only that he *will actually sin*, but that he *is* morally corrupt.

If any of you should be startled at the difficulties of the doctrine which I have here laid down, and which has always been and is maintained by evangelical ministers and Christians through the world; let me tell you that the rejection of the doctrine will involve you in difficulties far more startling.

Before proceeding to other texts, let us briefly recapitulate what I have advanced on the important passage in Rom. 5: 12—19.

In attending to the representation which the Apostle here makes in regard to the death and condemnation which come upon mankind in consequence of the offence of Adam, the

Digitized by Google

question arose, whether these evils come upon them as beings morally pure; in other words, whether the Apostle teaches that any of those whom he represents as standing in such a connection with Adam, and as brought under death and condemnation by his offence, do in fact suffer those tremendous evils without being themselves in some way sinful. I answered in the negative, for the reasons above given. First; we are taught in this very passage that those who suffer these evils, are *constituted sinners*, and that death comes upon all because that *all have sinned*. No exception is suggested. Secondly; other parts of Scripture teach the same. And, thirdly; it is a well known principle, and one which we almost instinctively admit, that suffering is never inflicted on those who are placed under a just moral government, while they are pure from sin. The result of the whole is, that the fact here stated, namely, that all the human race are subjected to death in consequence of Adam's offence, manifestly implies *that they are all morally depraved*. And they are depraved because they are *the children of apostate Adam;* they are *constituted sinners* by his offence. His sin is the occasion of their being *sinners;* and it has this effect by the sovereign constitution of God, which brings them into such a relation to their common father. They are depraved in consequence of their coming into existence *as his posterity*. And this is the same as saying that their depravity is natural — that it belongs to them in their native state, the state in which they are born.

The next passage which I shall cite, and which will confirm the views above expressed, is John 3: 6; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," σάρξ ἐστι. The connection and drift of the discourse make the meaning evident. Our Saviour referred to that state or quality of man which disqualifies him for the kingdom of God, and which renders it necessary that he should be created anew by the Divine Spirit. And what is that but a state of moral depravity? What but a sinful heart can debar any man from the blessedness of heaven? What but this can make it necessary to our happiness that we should experience so great a change as to be born again? It is then, in my view,

Digitized by Google

perfectly obvious that the word *flesh* is here used to denote a *depraved nature*, a state in which the soul is subject to carnal and sinful affections, instead of being subject to the law of God.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that the same word is often used in a similar sense in other passages of Scripture. In Rom. 7 and 8, to be "in the flesh," to have a "fleshly" or "carnal mind," denotes a state opposite to holiness — a state of enmity against God — a state of spiritual death. In Gal. 5, the Apostle speaks of the flesh as that in man which lusteth against the spirit, i. e., has desires in opposition to that moral purity of which the Divine Spirit is the Author. And when he mentions the works of the flesh, he mentions the various forms of sin. As we thus find that the word *flesh* is used by the Apostle in this moral sense, and is manifestly intended to denote the sinful disposition and character of man, we are confirmed in the interpretation which has been given of it as used by Christ in John 3: 6.

Let us now consider the other part of the passage: "That which is born of the flesh." To be born of the flesh is the common characteristic of human beings. It is that natural birth by which they are brought into personal existence. Now Christ teaches us that the vitiated nature of man comes by his natural birth; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It is sometimes thought that the word *flesh* is here used in widely different senses. But may not the senses in the two cases be more alike than has been frequently supposed? It is very evident that the word in the last case denotes a morally depraved nature, a sinful character in all who are born. And may it not in the first case denote the same nature in those of whom they are born? The children are like their parents. This is a general law of our nature. Fact proves, as well as the Bible, that this is as true in a moral sense as in any other. Through all generations parents and children have had unholy affections, sinfulness of character. We except no one but Jesus of Nazareth, whose conception was not according to the established laws

Digitized by Google

of human descent. The fact has been known and acknowledged from the beginning to the present day. So that it was a pertinent question in Job's time, and is so at all times; "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" And "how can he be clean that is born of a woman?"

The two points above mentioned are, I think, specially important in the interpretation of the text; "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." First, flesh as used at the close of the sentence, signifies man's sinful disposition, his vitiated moral nature. It relates to man as a moral, accountable being, and indicates such a sinfulness in his character that he must be renewed by the Spirit, or he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. And, secondly, this depravity comes by natural descent. Man has it in that state into which he is born, or as he is born, and in consequence of his being born of parents who have the same depraved nature.

This construction is sustained by the clause immediately following. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "Spirit," at the close, must mean spiritual, holy affections, — a pure and heavenly state of mind, — a character conformed to the divine law. And this character is that which he has as born of the Spirit, or in consequence of being born of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Author of the new birth; and as that which is derived from depraved parents is depraved, so that which is derived from the Holy Spirit is holy. As the phraseology in the two parts of the verse is similar, the interpretation of both proceeds on the same principle. That which is born in each case resembles that of which it is born.

This sense of the passage is maintained by the best commentators. Even Rosenmuller gives nearly the same signification. "By flesh," he says, "is meant the nature of man, — man with all his moral imperfection, subject to the dominion of his bodily appetites. And *he that is born of parents who have this moral imperfection, is like his parents.*" So Knapp: "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* From men who are weak, erring, and sinful *men of the same character are born.*" And Dwight says;

Digitized by Google

"The fleshly character is inseparably connected with *the birth of man.*"

As a farther proof of the correctness of the above interpretation, and of the truth of the doctrine of native depravity, I cite Ephes. 2: 3. The Apostle says of himself and other Jews; "We were by nature children of wrath, even as others." To be children of wrath, is to be exposed to God's displeasure, to be deserving of punishment. So Schleusner and others. Jews and Gentiles then are deserving of divine punishments, "pœnis divinis digni;" which is the same as to say, they are *sinners*. And the Apostle says they are so "*by nature.*" The first meaning of the word φύσις, nature, according to Schleusner, Wahl, and others, is, "*birth, origin, nativity.*" Gal. 2: 15. We were by nature Jews; φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι. We were *native Jews — born Jews.* — The next meaning given by Schleusner and Wahl is, "*that which belongs to a thing from its origin or birth; native disposition, native qualities or properties of any person.*" When therefore the Apostle teaches that men are sinners, and so children of wrath, "*by nature,*" the obvious meaning is, that they are so *by birth*, or *in that state into which they are born;* that this is their native character and condition. If a man comes to possess a particular character in consequence of a change which takes place in him when he is a child or afterwards, we never say, he is what he is *by nature*. Accordingly we never say a man is by nature holy; because this would mean that holiness is his native character, or is natural to him, which would be wholly inconsistent with its resulting from a spiritual and supernatural change, or a new birth. We say of some persons of a particular temperament, that they are *naturally indolent.* But if their indolence is the consequence of disease, we say, it is not their natural disposition, but has come upon them in consequence of such a physical cause.

Knapp, in his remarks on Eph. 2: 3, explains the term φύσις, (nature,) thus; "φύσις properly signifies, first, origin, birth, from φύω, nascor, to be born. So in Gal. 2: 15, φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι, Jews by birth, native Jews; and so in the classics. Secondly. It is also used both by the Jews and classics to denote the original, in-

Digitized by Google

born, and peculiar properties, attributes, or nature of a thing or person, the naturalis indoles, or affectio, as Rom. 11: 21, 24. The term natural is used in this doctrine in opposition to what is acquired, or first produced or occasioned by external causes. It denotes that for which there is a foundation in man himself. We say for example, that such a man has natural sagacity, that a disease is natural to another, that he is by nature a poet, etc., because the qualities here spoken of are not the result of diligence, practice, or external circumstances." He says, "Some prefer the word *innate*, a term which, as well as the other, is Scriptural." He refers to the elder Pliny's use of the word *congenitus* in the sense of innate, and Cicero's use of *nativum;* and then adds; "It is with justice that a quality which had its origin at the same time with man, which is found in him from his earliest youth, and can be wholly eradicated by no effort, is denominated *natural.* In this sense we speak at the present day of innate or hereditary faults, virtues, and excellencies." Knapp's Theology, vol. 2, pp. 65, 67.*

A careful comparison of Eph. 2: 3, with John 3: 6, confirms all that has been said. Christ represents our carnal, depraved disposition, as arising from our *birth.* "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" just as holiness arises from our renewal, or the second birth. And here the Apostle says, we are children of wrath, (and by implication sinners,) *by nature.* The general idea is manifestly the same.

The words of David, Ps. 51: 3, have generally been cited as evidence of native depravity. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." A similar representation is made in Ps. 58: 3, where the wicked are said to "be estranged from the womb," and in Isa. 58: 8, where men are called "transgressors from the womb." The sense of the text, Ps. 51: 3, may

* Dr. Nathaniel W. Taylor, speaking of the sin of man, says, "The cause is in his *nature*, not in his circumstances." He says also, "All the world ascribe an effect to the nature of a thing, when no possible change in its appropriate circumstances will change the effect.'

Digitized by Google

be determined, first, by the general scope of the passage. David is deeply impressed with his own sinfulness, makes humble confession, and prays for purification and forgiveness. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. Behold I was shapen in iniquity," etc. Then he recognizes God as requiring purity of heart, and prays that he would impart it. "Purge me with hyssop," etc. The declaration, verse 3, stands thus in the midst of the most humble confessions of moral pollution, and the most fervent supplications for cleansing; and it doubtless has a meaning correspondent with the general current of thought in the place. When the same writer says of the wicked, that they are estranged from the womb and go astray as soon as they are born, and the prophet says, "I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb," they evidently intend to make a strong impression of criminality. It is the same as though they had said of the wicked, that they have not only sinned in particular instances and under great temptation, but have *always been wicked, sinning from the very beginning of their existence;* in the forcible language of Scripture, sinning *from the womb* or *as soon as born.* Now it is obviously natural to consider David in Ps. 51, as reflecting, first, upon the particular transgression he had committed; then turning his eye upon the fountain of pollution within, and upon the various exhibitions of it in past life, and acknowledging with shame and penitence and self-loathing, that he had been sinful all his days; that he was even born in sin. Just as we sometimes say of a proud, selfish, malicious man, to aggravate the hatefulness of his character, *he has had that vile disposition ever since he was born. It is his very nature; he was born so.* The passage under consideration very naturally signifies that moral corruption is a native quality of man; that it is contemporaneous with his birth; that the human soul has from the commencement of its existence what Professor Stuart very aptly calls "the germ of sin," which, as soon as there is

Digitized by Google

sufficient growth and maturity, will develop itself in sinful action. The language in which David charges himself with being so sinful from the beginning of his life, is undoubtedly figurative, and expressive of strong emotions. But because he expresses the thing very forcibly, and in language which goes beyond what is customary where there is no emotion, shall we coldly explain away the obvious sense of the passage, and overlook that consciousness of deep pollution which the words reveal? The best means of understanding the passage is, to possess the same state of mind with David. If any of us were in his circumstances, and had his conviction of sin, his penitence and self-loathing, and his desire for purification, we should be likely to utter our feelings in the same impassioned language.

But the sense of the words before us, which is so apparent from a consideration of the scope of the passage, will be still more satisfactorily seen by comparing this text with the other passages before mentioned, where the same truth is set forth in a more didactic form, and in language which admits of a more exact and rigid interpretation. David utters the sense he has of that deep depravity of his heart which had been acting itself out all his days, by saying, that he was born in iniquity and conceived in sin, i. e., was sinful from his birth and by his birth, a degenerate plant of a strange vine. Paul teaches that we are children of wrath "*by nature;*" and Christ teaches that a carnal mind, an earthly, sinful disposition, is born with us;—"That which is *born* of the *flesh is flesh.*" And to remove every reasonable doubt, compare all these texts, and others bearing on the same subject, with the general fact which every attentive observer of human nature has noticed, namely, the putting forth of a wrong spirit of mind in early life.

On the whole I think it will appear to every one who examines the subject with candor, that, even without revelation, we have as much evidence in this case, as we have in other cases where no one has any doubt. Take those things which are usually regarded as natural to man,—native attributes or qualities of his mind. Take, for example, *intelligence*, a *disposition*

Digitized by Google

for society, and *parental affection*. Why are these regarded as native properties of man? Evidently because they uniformly and spontaneously develop themselves when his bodily and mental powers become capable of making such a development, and when the proper occasion for it occurs. What other evidence have we that these naturally belong to man? And is there any other proof than what I have above suggested, that it is natural to man to have a soul, or that he is born with a soul? Is it said by way of objection, that there is no appearance of depravity in man for some time after his birth? This is admitted. And is not the same true of reason, of the social and sympathetic dispositions, of parental affection, and even of the existence of the soul? Some of these are indeed developed very early, as the existence of mind, and reason, and a social disposition. But other properties which are natural to the mind are developed at a later period; and the parental affection can hardly be said to come into distinct operation before the parental relation exists. And yet who ever hesitated on this account to consider parental affection as natural to man? It is just as evident that this affection results from the nature which man receives at his birth, as it would be if it began to operate as soon as he is born. Such is the argument for native depravity, even without calling in the evidence from revelation. But when this is added, the proof is in the highest degree convincing.

I have at present only one additional view of the subject. Suppose then we had the same evidence of the *opposite* fact, as we have of native depravity; suppose that human beings were universally holy, as Jesus was; suppose the feelings developed in early life, and afterwards, were, in every man uniformly right; suppose that all the temptations to sin with which mankind are beset from the beginning of their life, should fail, as they did in the case of our Saviour, of producing the least moral pollution; and suppose, in addition to all this, we had a declaration of an Apostle, that all men are *by nature* objects of divine complacency and heirs of heaven, and a declaration of Christ, that that which is born of earthly parents is *holy;* and suppose that

Digitized by Google

there had been good reason for the inquiry among thinking men, *how can that which is born of a woman be impure?* and that an eminent saint, while contemplating with complacency his own uniform goodness of heart, should exclaim, that he was *conceived in purity and brought forth in the holy image of God;* and suppose, once more, that if there were any instances of sin, they were instances of a change from a previous state of holiness, brought about through the extraordinary influence of some malignant being; suppose all this; and should we hesitate a moment to say, that man is *naturally holy?* or that moral purity is his *native character?* Do we hesitate to say this of Jesus, the son of Mary? And if evidence like this would prove the doctrine of man's *native purity*, why does not the same kind and degree of evidence on the other side prove the doctrine of his *native depravity?* And if any are not convinced of the truth of the doctrine by evidence like this, I beg leave to ask, whether any conceivable evidence would convince them? What better evidence would they desire? Let them describe the proof which they would think reasonable, and which would satisfy them of the truth of the doctrine. Do any say, the doctrine is such that it is impossible to prove it; no evidence whatever would convince us of its truth? With such persons arguments would be in vain. They take the position of those Unitarians who say, that whatever evidence there might be of the doctrine of the Trinity, it would not convince them; a position which we should hardly expect would be taken by men who entertain even a common respect for reason and philosophy.

It has always been considered proper to argue in support of any doctrine, *from the evident consequences of denying it.* This kind of argument I think not unimportant in relation to the doctrine of native depravity.

Professor Stuart expresses an opinion which few will call in question, when he says, "Whatever may be the degradation into which we are now born — *we are still born moral agents, free agents, with faculties to do good, yea all the faculties that are needed.*" This is a point in which men are generally agreed.

Digitized by Google

We are born with an intelligent and moral nature; in other words, we have rational souls from the beginning. If any one denies this, he must hold that the human soul is created after the birth of the body. And he must hold that this creation of the soul takes place very soon after the birth of the body; because only a short time elapses before the human offspring begins to show signs of thought. Does any one hold that the signs of thought and feeling which a young child at first exhibits, are nothing different from what appear in the brutal species, and so are no evidence of the existence of a rational and moral nature? And does he hold accordingly that a human being exists for a considerable time, — may be six months or a year, — with only that principle of intelligence and feeling which belongs to irrational animals, and that he afterwards receives from the creative hand of God a rational and immortal soul? I reply: if a child may exist so long, and advance so far towards developing a human character, without a human soul; why may he not do without a soul still further? Or if it should be thought that after a time, (six months or a year) the exigencies of human existence demand the addition of a soul, we should suppose that the time when this important event takes place would be attended with some visible signs; that the transition from the state of mere animal existence, to rational and moral existence, must be followed at once by some very noticeable effects. To say that so momentous a change could take place without being observed, would be unreasonable. On the contrary, we should suppose that past experience must have clearly shown at what period or near what period of life, such an event usually takes place; and that, when the period approaches, an intense interest must be waked up in the minds of parents and friends, — an interest far greater than that which is commonly felt in the birth of the body. For surely the production of an immortal soul is a vastly more important event, than the bringing forth of a mortal body. If the opinion under consideration is true, then we should think that when the time for the occurrence of such a wonderful event draws near, whether by night or by day, all

Digitized by Google

eyes would be awake to observe it. For who can be inattentive when a little child, say a year old, is about to receive from the hand of God a never dying soul, — to be changed from a mere animal to a rational and moral being, and so to be joined to the society of those who are subject to the law and accountable for their actions? But what evidence is there of such a change? To suppose such a thing would be unreasonable and unphilosophical, if not ridiculous. On such a supposition we might wish to inquire, what becomes of those who die in infancy, before they have a soul? Will they ever have a soul? If so, we suppose it must be created and joined to the body at or after the resurrection; for it could hardly be thought that God would create souls in the intermediate time between death and the resurrection. If those who die in infancy die without souls, and are never to have souls; then we can hardly believe that their bodies will be raised from the dead? For what concern can mere animal bodies have in the judgment day, which is intended for moral beings, and appertains wholly to a moral government? And if those who die in early childhood, are not to be raised from the dead, then what John says, "I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God," must be understood in a very limited sense; for those who die in infancy make no inconsiderable part of the human race. Such a notion as this would occasion great and distressing difficulties. How would parents feel, how ought they to feel, in respect to children who live and die without souls, and who of course do not belong to the family of rational and moral beings, and to whom death will be an eternal sleep? What would parents do with their *natural affections*, which manifestly imply that their offspring have, not only the same animal nature, but the same intelligent, social, and moral nature with themselves? How should they regulate their *prayers* for their children? Or rather how could they with propriety pray for them at all? Or if they should pray, for what should they pray? And what would be the meaning of religious rites in relation to those who have no souls?

Digitized by Google

But I have said enough, perhaps too much, on such a subject. For who will deny that human beings are born with souls, — born rational and moral agents? Some however admit that men are born rational and moral beings, while they do not admit that they are born subjects of moral depravity. But if mankind are born intelligent and moral agents, and yet are not subjects of depravity at the commencement of their being, then one of two things must be true; *they are either holy*, or *they have no character at all*, i. e., are in a state of indifference as to holiness and sin. Rational and moral beings cannot be supposed capable of existing in more than three states; *a state of holiness* or moral purity, *a state of sin* or depravity, and *a state of neutrality*, in which they are neither holy nor sinful. But human beings as they commence their existence, are not holy. This is proved by evidence too clear to be doubted; and it is a point in which all who believe the Bible are agreed. If then they are not morally depraved, they are in a state of neutrality, having nothing either morally good or evil. Our present business is to examine this position, and see what difficulties attend it and what consequences would seem to flow from it.

Here then we have a being with a rational soul, — one *born a moral agent*, without any disposition, either right or wrong, without any bias or tendency either to good or evil; — a moral nature but no moral character, not even the first elements of it; — a rational and immortal mind existing in no state either of holiness or sin? There seems to be some difficulty too of another kind, and still more important. A rational being, a moral agent, is of course a subject of moral government. From his very nature he is under law. But according to the supposition, this being, who is by his very nature under law, has no relation to law; and has nothing which the law can pronounce either good or bad, — nothing which can be either approved or disapproved by the final Judge. Now suppose he dies in early childhood. As he is born a moral agent, a subject of moral government, he will exist hereafter, and will be called to judgment at the last day. But what can the judgment day have to do with him?

Digitized by Google

What sentence, either favorable or unfavorable, can be passed upon him? He is neither righteous nor wicked, — neither pure nor impure; has no character, and is in no moral state, unless a change has taken place in him between death and judgment. Accordingly he cannot be admitted to heaven, because he is not holy; nor doomed to hell, because he is not sinful.

Again; if man is not the subject of moral depravity from the first, then there is a period, longer or shorter, at the beginning of life, during which regeneration is not necessary, nor even possible. It is not necessary, because there is no impurity to be removed, no sinful disposition to be subdued, no moral deficiency to be supplied. And as to the holiness which God requires, — what is there to hinder it when the proper time for it shall arrive, and a suitable object shall be presented to view? Evidently there can be no need of the renewal of the heart in order to the exercise of holiness; for the heart, remaining in its native state, in which there is nothing wrong, will, we should think, have right affections when it has any. In such a case how is regeneration even possible? The change implied in regeneration is a change from sin to holiness. But according to the supposition, man, at that period of his existence, neither has nor is capable of having anything either sinful or holy, either morally right or wrong. So that to suppose a change from the one to the other would be absurd. And if no moral change is necessary or conceivable during the first period of life, then it would be manifestly unsuitable to pray that a child during that period may have the influence of the Spirit to sanctify his heart; and all the fervent, agonizing supplications which pious parents have offered up to God, that their infant children might be born again, and so fitted for the kingdom of heaven, have resulted from mistake, and have been in vain.

If infant children are the subjects of no depravity and no moral deficiency, — if they are in no sense sinful; then how is their state different from what it would have been if Adam had not sinned? And what is the meaning of Rom. 5: 15 — 19. which

Digitized by Google

in different forms of expression sets forth the important effect of Adam's sin upon the state of his posterity?

Further; if the children of men, during the first period of their life, have no depravity; if they are in no sense to be regarded as sinners; then how are they capable of receiving the special benefits of Christ's death and mediation? And if they die during that period and go to the state of the blessed, how are they indebted to Christ for salvation? He died for *sinners*. He came to seek and save that which was *lost*. The Apostle says, "if one died for all, then were all dead;" i. e., dead in sin. Thus he makes the design of Christ's death reach to those, and those only, who are *sinners*, or in a state of spiritual death. Accordingly if there are any human beings who are not sinners, for *them Christ did not die*. For, unless the Apostle was mistaken, Christ's dying for them evinced that they were sinners. If he died for all, then were *all dead*. It would be contrary to the uniform representation of God's word to suppose, that the death of Christ, or the redemption which he accomplishes, relates to any who are not sinners. Theorizers may say what they will; this plain truth will come out, namely, that if all those who die during the first stage of their existence, (and a vast multitude they are,) die without any sin, they are saved, if saved at all, in a different way from the rest of mankind. They owe nothing to Christ as Redeemer. He did not die for them. And they can never join in the song of the redeemed; "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,—be glory and dominion forever and ever." They can never sustain the same relation to Christ with the redeemed, and can never have the same emotions of gratitude to him. The two great blessings which flow from Christ's work as Redeemer, are *forgiveness* and *sanctification*. If the doctrine of native depravity is not true, those who die in infancy are incapable of receiving either of these blessings. There can be no forgiveness where there is no guilt, and no sanctification where there is no depravity of heart. If mankind are not naturally depraved, what significancy can those who hold to the baptism of

Digitized by Google

infant children, attribute to that rite? Would it not be totally unmeaning? The ordinance of baptism is commonly understood to denote purification, i. e., spiritual renewal, either as already effected, or as necessary. But the baptism of infant children could not have any significancy, if they were not in any sense depraved. And if any one who denies native depravity administers this rite to children, does he know what he is doing? He may pray that God would bless the children, and preserve their life, and make their parents faithful. But unless he forgets himself and his piety prevails over his speculations, he will not pray, as is usual, that what is signified by the washing of water, may be accomplished in the souls of the children, that they may now be renewed by the Spirit and made the children of God, and that whether they live to adult years or die in infancy, they may thus be prepared for the kingdom of heaven. And if the same Christian minister is called to pray for infant children who are about to die, he will not, — (unless his piety prevails over his speculations,) — he will not earnestly pray that they may be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and that the blood of Christ may cleanse them from sin. He will not look to redeeming grace to save them. *He cannot do this consistently with his denial of native depravity.* We have witnessed more than once, how a minister who has renounced this doctrine is embarrassed and straitened, when he prays for infant children, either publicly or privately. He does not honestly regard them and feel for them as belonging to the ruined race of man, upon whom death and the sentence of condemnation have come through the offence of one; and he does not pour out his heart to God that he would grant them the blessings of redemption. He does not commit them in faith to the Lamb of God that taketh away sin. Thus does vain philosophy turn man aside from the simplicity of the Gospel, and check the spirit of prayer, and chill the warmest affections of the soul.

Such as I have now described, appear to me to be consequences of denying the native depravity of man. I might

Digitized by Google

mention still more. Some of those who deny this doctrine, are so bold and independent as to avow these consequences, at least the most important of them. Now in view of these consequences which seem plainly to flow from such a denial, we shall find great reason to be jealous over ourselves and to guard our judgment, our imagination, and our heart, against either neglecting or going beyond the dictates of God's holy word.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXV.

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO NATIVE DEPRAVITY INADMISSIBLE.

In the preceding chapters the doctrine of man's natural depravity has been stated, and the evidence which supports it briefly exhibited. And in addition to this, some of the consequences of denying the doctrine have been adverted to. Before leaving the subject it will be proper to examine very particularly the objections which are commonly urged against the doctrine. But before entering upon this examination, let us pause a little and inquire into the nature of the objections usually brought against our doctrine, and how far objections of this kind are worthy of our serious regard.

I cannot but think that we are in danger of being perplexed and led into hurtful mistakes by admitting all kinds of objections to be brought against a Scripture doctrine and allowing them to have influence upon our faith, or even to be entitled to particular consideration. My meaning may be illustrated by an example. A man is tried for the murder of his wife, and by evidence which is clear, abundant, and unquestionable, is proved to be guilty. But those engaged as counsel for the accused bring forward various objections to the fact of his having committed the deed. They argue, first, that it is extremely improbable, and even incredible, that a man endued with reason and conscience, should commit such a crime; especially that a man, endued with self-love, and a desire for his own safety and happiness, should commit a crime which would certainly expose him to ruin. Secondly, they argue that it is specially un-

Digitized by Google

reasonable to suppose that a man should lay violent hands upon the wife of his bosom, the mother of his children, and long the object of the tenderest affections of his heart. Thirdly, they argue that the man had a good education, was brought up in a good family, was esteemed and loved by his friends, and knew the happiness of domestic and social life; and that he had long proved himself to be a very affectionate husband; and that it cannot be supposed that he should voluntarily break all the ties which bound him to his dearest relatives, and sacrifice all the pleasure he might enjoy in their society and friendship. Fourthly, they say, how can we believe that a benevolent and powerful God, who directs and controls all events, would give a man up to commit a crime so horrible and destructive, or that a just and compassionate God would suffer a harmless and lovely wife to fall a sacrifice to the violence of her husband? These and other like objections are urged to discredit the fact proved, and to make it out that the man cannot be considered as guilty of the crime laid to his charge. But the learned and upright judge tells the advocates for the accused, that their arguments are *irrelevant and of no weight;* that *objections of such a kind are wholly inadmissible in a Court of Justice.* He says to them, have you anything to allege against the character of the witnesses, or anything to invalidate the testimony they have given? The advocates for the prisoner at the bar reply, that they have nothing in particular to allege in that way, but that they verily think the witnesses are somehow mistaken, and that the man cannot be guilty of such a crime. The judge says to them; "We do not inquire for *opinions*, but for *facts*. These speculative objections which you urge with so much warmth, have no force, being *mere conjectures*, *empty notions*, *matters of imagination or feeling*, which are set aside by the rules of justice. The Court cannot consent *even to take such objections into consideration.* They are *inadmissible.* How plausible soever they may be, they can avail nothing against testimony and facts. They are excluded by the laws of evidence."

The principle involved in this statement is of great impor-

Digitized by Google

tance, and should be carefully observed in regard to every doctrine of revelation and of natural religion. When, for example, we have clear and conclusive evidence, from within or from without, of *the being of God*, of his providential and moral government, and of the truth of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; we believe these doctrines; and we believe them confidently, notwithstanding any objections which can be urged against them. But suppose the objections are such as we are not able to obviate; what shall we say then? Our reply is that the objections are nothing but speculative opinions, the product of an irregular imagination, perhaps of a proud, unsubdued heart. And what can such objections avail in opposition to legitimate evidence and plain facts? The infidel comes forward with arguments against the existence and government of God. Some of his arguments are such that we are not able to meet them and to show directly that they have no force. What shall we do? Shall we allow them to be valid? No; we say they are *inadmissible*. Why? Because they are of such a nature, and used for such a purpose;—because they are *mere opinions, dubious speculations, and are arrayed against clear evidence and well known facts*. The Socinian urges a multitude of difficulties and objections against the doctrine of the Trinity. Are we able fully and satisfactorily to remove them? No; we do not pretend to this. How then do we proceed? We hold that whatever objections and difficulties may be insisted upon by the Socinian, they are made up of mere speculative opinions and conjectures, and cannot be admitted to have any weight in opposition to plain Scripture evidence; that, having satisfied ourselves that the Bible is the word of God, our great inquiry is, whether the Bible teaches the doctrine, not whether there are any speculative difficulties attending it. We proceed in the same way as to the atonement, the resurrection, and other doctrines. And this is the only safe and correct mode of proceeding in regard to the subject now before us. The doctrine that man is by nature entirely depraved, is supported by the clearest evidence from the word of God and from obvious facts. Our depravity has as

Digitized by Google

many marks or evidences of being natural as any of the attributes or qualities of our mind. First; it is universal. Secondly; it shows itself very early,—i. e., just as soon as we become capable of acting it out. Thirdly; it cannot be attributed to any change which takes place in man subsequently to his birth. Fourthly; it operates spontaneously, like other natural qualities. Fifthly; it is hard to be resisted and subdued. Sixthly; such obviously is the nature and condition of mankind, that we can certainly predict that all who are born into the world during the present and every future generation, will sin, and sin only through their whole moral existence, unless they are created anew by the Spirit of God. These marks of native depravity are presented before us by the word of God and by observation and experience. I hold that this evidence is *sufficient to establish the doctrine.* Any objection in order to be valid, must lie against this evidence. But if no one can show any fault in the evidence, the doctrine is proved. If any one affirms that the evidence is defective, let him show wherein it is defective. What better evidence, nay, what *other* evidence could the doctrine have, supposing it to be true? Review the whole argument again, and examine every part of it with still greater care. Take each of the marks of *native* depravity above mentioned by itself, and see whether it is not as clear an evidence as you could reasonably expect to find, on the supposition that our doctrine is true. Depravity is *universal.* Now could it be more evidently universal, if it actually belonged to the moral nature of man from the beginning? *It shows itself early.* If it were in fact a native quality, could it show itself earlier than it now does? Does it not take the very first opportunity which the state of the body and mind affords, to act itself out? And does it not, as it were, press for such an opportunity, even before the season for moral action fully arrives? Does not the principle of evil thrust itself out in a partial and broken manner, before a capacity exists for any more perfect forms of transgression?*

* "In combatting the doctrine of innate ideas, Mr. Locke, following Aristotle,

Digitized by Google

Again; *moral evil in man is not owing to any change which takes place in his disposition or character subsequently to his birth.* If this is true, is it not a clear proof that depravity is a natural, original property of man? Most evidently moral depravity belongs to him *afterwards*, when he becomes capable of showing what he is. Now if he afterwards has a depraved disposition, and if no change takes place in his disposition subsequently to his birth, then this depravity of nature belongs to him from the first. Is not this evident? It is true that our first parents were depraved. But the Scriptures show that their depravity implied a change in their moral state. At first they were obedient and holy. After a time they disobeyed. That act of disobedience was their fall. Before that they stood. They were upright. The act of sin mentioned was their *first* sin. Accordingly we never say that their depravity was natural. If they had possessed the same disposition from the first, as they showed when they disobeyed the divine command; if that disobedience had been only the acting out of a heart which had always been disinclined to obey God; we should say their sinfulness was natural, that they commenced their existence in a state of moral depravity. There is however clear evidence that this was not the case. But how is it with their posterity? Is there any evidence that their first state is a state of moral purity? that they are originally inclined to good? What evidence should we

---

has compared the human mind to a sheet of white paper, on which characters of different descriptions may subsequently be written. By those philosophers who deny the innate depravity of human nature, the comparison has frequently been applied to the mind in regard to its moral state, its dispositions and tendencies. It will be a juster comparison, if, in this respect, we liken the mind to a sheet of paper on which have been written characters in sympathetic ink, which are not discernible by the eye, till, by approximation to the fire, or by some appropriate chemical application, they are brought out into legible distinctness. So is it with the principles of evil in infancy. We may not, for a time, be sensible of their presence; and may be delighted with the smiling harmlessness of the little babe. But the principles are there; and require only the influence of circumstances to bring them into practical and visible manifestation, a manifestation which, to the eye of even a superficial observer, commences at a very early period." *Wardlaw's Christian Ethics, p.* 98. *London Ed.*

Digitized by Google

expect if this were actually the case? We should expect the evidence of facts. We should expect to see a natural inclination to good unfolded in *acts* of goodness, as soon as men are capable of such acts. We should expect to see an early development of those right feelings which are the first principles of holiness, —*just such a development as was made by the child Jesus;* I add, and such as was first made by Adam and Eve. Jesus began his existence as a man in a state of *perfect moral purity.* His nature was holy from the first, and he acted out that pure and holy nature very early, in the way of loving and obeying God. The good tree bore good fruit. This was the visible evidence he gave of his native purity, — his original disposition to goodness. It was just such evidence as would naturally be expected. And it is what we should now expect of human beings generally, if they were born in a state of moral purity, — unless they were corrupted *after* they were born, and *before* they were capable of visible moral actions. But do the children of men show any such signs that they have a nature originally pure and holy? Or do the Scriptures teach that they have? I demand then of any who assert the native purity of man, that they produce some plain proof of such purity. And if there is no proof of this, then clearly there is no proof that any moral change takes place in man after his birth, in order to his being depraved. If it is said, as it is said by Dr. John Taylor and Dr. Ware, that we are originally without any moral bias one way or the other, — neither inclined nor disinclined to holiness or to sin, — that we are perfectly neutral; here again I look for evidence. What proof might we naturally and justly expect, were this the fact? If the minds of men were at first as much inclined one way as the other, certainly we should expect they would show this. If in some circumstances, that is, in circumstances strongly tempting and urging them to sin, they were to bend *one* way; in other circumstances as strongly urging them to holiness, we should expect they would bend the other way. But our expectation would be sadly disappointed. For the children of men, whom the writers above named suppose to be equally

Digitized by Google

inclined both ways do all *actually incline one way* and that *the wrong way;* — all of them, as soon as they are capable, yield themselves servants to sin; — Jesus only excepted, — not one of the whole race, unless born again, ever inclines to the way of holiness. I say then, there is no such evidence as we should naturally look for, to prove that men commence their existence in an indifferent, neutral state, inclined neither one way nor the other. Of course there is no evidence against the common position, that the depravity which shows itself in early life is natural to man; as there is no reason to suppose that it is the result of a change either from an original state of holiness, or from a neutral state. The evidence in favor of our position is then, in this respect, subject to no abatement; nor is it conceivable how it could be greater than it is.

Another evidence before mentioned in favor of considering our depravity native, is, that *it operates spontaneously.* It operates thus in early life, and ever afterwards. Is not this such evidence as we should naturally look for to prove human depravity to be natural? Is it not the same proof that we have that other things are natural? Does not this principle of evil which we have in our hearts, operate as freely and spontaneously as any of our bodily appetites? Does it not manifest as much intrinsic force, as much impulse to action, as what we call natural affection? And does it not manifest this as early as the state of the body and mind will allow? Now supposing our depravity to be natural, could we in this respect look for any greater evidence of its being so than we have? Is it conceivable that a heart really depraved from the first, could act out its depravity more spontaneously, more promptly, or under less force of temptation, in early life and afterwards, than the heart of man actually does?

Farther; depravity has the same mark of being natural, with other things commonly considered as natural, in this respect also, that *it is hard to be resisted and overcome.* Is not this one of the marks which we should expect to find, supposing our depravity to be natural? And so far as this is concerned, is there any defect in the evidence? Is there any instance among human beings,

Digitized by Google

even among those who attend to religion in very early life, in which the principle of evil in the heart is *easily subdued?* Is there any instance in which it is overcome and eradicated without immense labor and difficulty? Yea, is it ever overcome without the almighty help of God's Spirit? On supposition that depravity does really belong to our moral nature from the beginning, can we conceive that it would require more earnest or more lasting effort, or more divine help, to overcome it, than is found to be necessary now in the experience of Christians? In this respect then, could any one demand greater evidence than we actually have, that our doctrine is true?

There is still another point, namely; such is the nature of man, —such the state in which human beings are born, that *we can certainly predict that they will all sin, and only sin, unless they are born again.* Is there any defect in *this* evidence of native corruption? Does not the circumstance that we can certainly foretell what will be the moral development of the mind in every one of our race, imply that the original state of the mind is disordered? In this matter we do not wait for development. We do not wait for a single action or motion of a new born child. As soon as we see a human being, though at the very beginning of life, we know that such a being will sin. Does not this imply that we know what sort of a being he is? But how do we know this? Why, how do we know that a young grape-vine will bear grapes, and that a young fig-tree will bear figs? And how do we know that a young thorn-bush will bear thorn-berries, and not oranges? And how do we know that a young lion will be fierce and carnivorous? And how do we know that a new born child will think and remember and feel? We know it from uniform experience. And is not experience just as uniform in regard to sin? Accordingly, we know that every human being will sin, as certainly as we know what will take place in any of the other instances above mentioned. Have we not then, in this respect, the highest possible evidence that man's moral nature is from the first depraved? Does not this perfect uniformity of effects indicate a settled constitution of things,—a uniform cause? Is not this a maxim

Digitized by Google

with all sober men, both as to the physical and moral world? Does any one doubt the conclusion and say, *it may be, after all, that something different will result from the nature or state of mind which man originally has. Children are born intelligent, free, moral agents. Now it may be that some of them will avoid sin and be completely holy, as Jesus was. It may be that some change of circumstances will lead to this. It may be that some of these millions of free agents will give a right direction to their rational and moral powers, and by a sinless life, show that they had no sinfulness of nature. It may be that some of these trees will bear good fruit, and will thus manifest that they are good trees.* If any of you think that this may be the case, or if you have doubts on the subject, then wait and see. Let future experience solve your doubts. If you find that any of the descendants of Adam, in any circumstances, are not sinners—if you find that any of the multitude who are now in infancy, or any who shall be born hereafter, are free from sin, if you find any one, who without being born again, has any degree of holiness; then I will acknowledge that the evidence here presented is defective. The effects, if not perfectly uniform, could not be considered as proceeding from the uniform cause above mentioned, i. e. the original state of the human mind, or the moral nature of man. But as all past experience has been uniform, we must consider the argument good, until future experience shall furnish some exception. If one single exception shall ever be made; if there is ever found, even in the millennium, a single son or daughter of Adam who, without being changed by the Divine Spirit, shall love and obey God; then and only then will it be evident that the argument here used is not conclusive. And if future experience should prove the argument inconclusive, how could we support the credit of the holy Scriptures?

As to the evidence from the Scriptures, I put the same question. Is there any defect in it? Take the passages separately and together. Do they not teach as clearly as any language could teach, that the character which we have by nature, or in consequence of our natural birth, is such that we cannot be ad-

Digitized by Google

mitted into heaven, without being changed by the Spirit of God? No words could more certainly show that we have, while unrenewed, a sinful character; or that this character comes in consequence of our natural birth. No words could more certainly show that we are depraved by nature. The texts need not be repeated. I contend that the Scriptures clearly teach the common doctrine, and that it is not easy to conceive how they could teach it more clearly.

I make the appeal then to those who love the truth, and who are accustomed to use their reason, and to judge according to evidence. Is there any flaw in the argument by which the doctrine is supported? Is there any mistake in the facts which lie at the foundation of the reasoning? Is not the fact in each case such, both in regard to nature and degree, as I have represented? And does not each fact contain evidence which bears directly upon the question at issue? I ask then, is the evidence which has been adduced, defective? Wherein does it fail? But if you have nothing to offer against the evidence of the doctrine, showing that it is in some way faulty or inconclusive; then, according to the rules of reasoning, you must acknowledge that the doctrine is established.

The objections which are most frequently urged against the doctrine of native depravity, and which have the greatest weight in the minds of men, are of such a kind, that they may be *dismissed at once as unworthy of regard.* They are of no weight in respect to the point at issue. Consisting as they do of speculations, abstract reasonings, conjectures and cavils, they can never avail anything against the evidence of facts. Let these objections be multiplied a hundred fold; if arrayed against clear, unimpeachable evidence — evidence which is addressed to common sense, and such as is acknowledged in all other cases to be conclusive; we fling them to the winds. An objection is stated. We say, we have clear, conclusive evidence of the fact. Another objection is stated, and another, and another. We meet them with the same reply, that we have clear evidence of the fact. You may allege, that we cannot reconcile native depravity either

Digitized by Google

with the benevolence of God, or with his justice, or with our free moral agency and accountability. Well, suppose we cannot reconcile these things. Does it follow that *God cannot?* Are we equal to GOD? And because we are now unable to reconcile these things, does it follow that we shall always be unable? Be it so, that we are wholly unable to reconcile our native depravity with the divine benevolence or justice. What does this inability, or more properly what does this ignorance of ours weigh against clear evidence of the fact? Be it so, that we cannot reconcile our doctrine with our moral agency and accountability, or the principles of a righteous moral government. What does our ignorance in this respect weigh against a plain matter of fact? If our ignorance, or the objections and difficulties which arise from our ignorance, are to be regarded as valid arguments, if they are sufficient to outweigh clear evidence, and to disprove well attested facts; then we can disprove the Scripture account of the creation, the deluge, and the destruction of Sodom; the doctrine of the Trinity, the atonement of Christ, the influence of the Spirit, the resurrection, future punishment, and most of the doctrines of revelation. And in the same way, we can disprove well known facts in regard to the magnetic power, the growth of a tree, the operations of mind both awake and asleep, and numberless things which occur in our daily experience; yea, we can disprove the existence of God, and all the doctrines of natural religion. For we can ask questions in regard to each of these, which no man can answer. We can bring forward objections and difficulties which no man can solve. But what do these unanswerable objections and these insolvable dfficulties prove? they prove *our ignorance*, and should make us very humble. But they can never be admitted as valid arguments against obvious and well attested facts.

The remarks I have made involve a principle of great practical importance. We are often employed in attempting to answer the speculative objections which are urged against the doctrine of natural depravity and other important articles of our faith. And we sometimes proceed in such a manner as seems to

Digitized by Google

imply, that we cannot consistently hold the doctrines of religion, unless all objections and difficulties are removed; and we labor hard and spend much precious time in endeavoring to remove them. But this is needless. These speculative objections may be dismissed at once as of no weight — as totally *inadmissible.* What are empty notions, imaginations, surmises, dreams, originating in minds disordered and dark, and what are complaints and cavils, originating in proud unbelieving hearts, that they should avail any thing in opposition to clear evidence and fact? When we have looked at the evidence furnished by the word and providence of God, and find what is the fact, our great business as inquirers after the truth is at an end, and our faith settled. And if any one comes forward, not to show any want of clearness or conclusiveness in the evidence we produce, or any flaw in our arguments, but to bring speculative objections and cavils against a *Scripture doctrine* — a *well established truth;* the Apostle has taught us how to meet him: "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" We prove the doctrine of divine purposes, by clear, indisputable arguments, drawn from reason and Scripture. Now if the objector passes by all this evidence, which is the very thing he is concerned with, and goes to finding fault with the *doctrine itself, he replies against* God. He is a *caviller.* We prove that all men are naturally depraved — sinners from the first, and that they are so in consequence of the original apostasy; that they are constituted sinners by the one offence of Adam. We prove this doctrine by the plainest and most conclusive evidence. The objector neglects this evidence, and disputes against *the doctrine itself* — against that which the word of God and facts clearly teach. He too is a caviller. *He replies against God.* He finds fault with God's appointment and the mode of his operation, and says, it is unjust. He says, if this is God's constitution, then we are not culpable for our sinfulness; and to punish us would be unrighteous. Now when it comes to this, I have only one answer to repeat, the answer of Paul to the caviller of his day: "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him

Digitized by Google

that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay?" — Who art thou that demandest the reasons of God's unsearchable dispensations? Does it belong to *thee* to give counsel to the only wise God, or to pronounce judgment on his ways? Does it become an ignorant, guilty man to say to the Almighty, "What doest thou?" Shall the infinite God ask such a one as thou art, what will be proper for him to do in creating a world and in fixing the condition of his creatures? Has he not wisdom enough without coming to be instructed by *thee?* Has he not justice and benevolence enough without being prompted by *thee?* And is he not powerful enough without borrowing strength of *thee?* Who art *thou* that repliest against God?

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXVI.

OBJECTIONS TO NATIVE DEPRAVITY PARTICULARLY EXAMINED.

In the preceding chapter, it has, I think, been made to appear that the objections commonly brought against the doctrine of depravity, directed as they are, not against the evidence by which the doctrine is supported, but against *the doctrine itself*, are totally *inadmissible*. The great question at issue is, whether the doctrine is *true*, not whether it is attended with difficulties; — whether it is proved by *sufficient evidence*, not whether, being thus proved, it is liable to objections from the ignorance, or pride, or ingenuity of man. Even should the objections be unanswerable, they cannot be allowed to have any weight against a doctrine which rests on clear, abundant, and unquestionable evidence. Accordingly I might claim the right of stopping here, resting the truth of the doctrine on the direct arguments which have been urged in its favor, and leaving objections to take care of themselves. This would in itself be right. And nothing more can be deemed necessary, when the doctrine is held forth merely for common, practical purposes. There is even an injury to be apprehended from an attempt to obviate metaphysical objections and difficulties before those who are not capable of understanding metaphysical discussion.

But inasmuch as objections have been continually urged by learned and able disputants, and as these objections are of such a nature as may occasion doubt and perplexity to sincere Christians, and to those who are engaged professionally in the study

Digitized by Google

of theology, and may greatly diminish the salutary influence of divine truth, I have thought it expedient to bring the chief of them under a more extended review. If I succeed in detecting the fallacy of the principles which the objections involve, or in showing that, however plausible, they have little or no weight, and do not disprove the truth of the doctrine; I shall do all that the case requires.

The first objection that I shall now more particularly examine, relates to *the moral perfections of God.* It is alleged to be inconsistent with the holiness and benevolence of God, and even with his justice, to bring men into existence destitute of that holiness which is essential to their well-being, and in such a state of depravity as will certainly lead on to a life of sin and an eternity of misery unless redeeming grace prevent, and to involve the whole human race in this dreadful calamity on account of the one offence of their first father.

This objection I have already briefly noticed. But I shall now present it in a varied form, and subject it to a more particular examination.

With our very limited faculties, and especially while those faculties are so disordered by sin, we are by no means competent to determine what is or is not consistent with the moral attributes of God, except as we are instructed by his word and providence. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been," and who is qualified to be, "his counsellor?" In regard to the plan of creation and providence, who is qualified to tell God what will be fit and what will be unfit for him to do? What means have we of determining beforehand in what manner infinite perfection will be developed, what scheme infinite wisdom and goodness will adopt, and how that scheme can best be carried into execution? In order to judge on such a subject, we must have an understanding, capable of taking into view and knowing perfectly the whole extent of a created universe, and all its operations and results through endless duration; whereas we are not able perfectly to know the smallest part of it, even at the present time. Before the incomprehensible greatness of such an object as the

Digitized by Google

universe, even that inconsiderable part of it to which we belong, we are constrained to say, "We are of yesterday and *know nothing*." An ability to judge on this subject would moreover imply a comprehensive and perfect knowledge of the infinite perfections of God; because the whole system of creation and providence must be considered as standing in a most intimate relation to the divine perfections, as entirely corresponding with them, and as suited most clearly to make them known to intelligent creatures. This view of the subject is suited to cure our pride and arrogance, and to make us feel that we are to occupy the place of learners, not of judges.

What then is the position which we are to take? As rational creatures, with the works and word of our Creator before us, and with the idea of his infinite perfection within us, what have we to do? Not surely to settle the question whether God is infinitely wise and good, but to inquire how this infinitely wise and good being *has made himself known;* not what he *could consistently do*, but what he *has done;* not what his plan of operation *should* be, but what it *is*. There is nothing within the province of our intelligence which we know more certainly than this, that *whatever God does is right*. So far then as we can determine *what God does*, we can determine what is right. As soon as we come to know what the manner of God's acting is, either in creation or providence, that moment we know what agrees with infinite wisdom and benevolence. This is true in respect to everything which God accomplishes in the whole compass of his agency. Viewed in the light in which God views it, and in relation to the mode of his operation and to the ends which he aims at, *it is right*. And as soon as we know in any case what the divine conduct is, though we may be totally unable to understand in what particular light God regards it, or what particular ends he means to subserve by it, we believe and know that it is right. But why do we believe this? and how do we know it? We believe and know it to be right *merely because* GOD *does it*. Our conclusion results from our full confidence in God. Suppose that Abraham, not yet informed of God's intentions respecting Sodom,

Digitized by Google

inquires with himself; "What ought to be done and what will a righteous God do with that guilty city?" He cannot answer the question. Suppose the inquiry arises in his mind, whether God will destroy the city and all its inhabitants, both old and young, with a sudden and dreadful destruction; he cannot answer; or perhaps he may say, "Far be it from a God of infinite mercy to do this." But the moment he sees that God *has* done it, or knows that he *will* do it, he says, it is right. And if any one had said to him: "Do you think that your God and the God of your seed will command you to offer up your son Isaac as a sacrifice?" he would probably have answered, "No; a holy and merciful and covenant-keeping God can never do this." But what does he do when God actually commands it? Does he hesitate and inquire how it can be consistent with the holiness and goodness and faithfulness of God? No; he instantly acquiesces, and proceeds to do what is commanded. He has confidence in God, and believes and knows that his command is right.

This is the principle on which the Apostle proceeds in Rom. 9. He shows what is the actual conduct of God in saving some and not saving others; in making some vessels of mercy, and others vessels of wrath. He brings to view an important fact in the divine administration. Some call in question the propriety of this, and object. But *Paul allows no objection to be brought.* He does not allow men to put the question; "Why doth God then find fault?" He shows them that it is altogether unbecoming for them to reply against God, or to call in question the righteousness of his dispensations. He rebukes them. The principle he adopts is, that we are to have perfect confidence in God; that as soon as we know what he does, we must be satisfied that it is right.

This principle, if carried into our reasoning on the present subject, will help us at once to dispose of the common objections and difficulties, and will prepare us to believe the truth, just as it is made known by God's word and providence.

The first point we are to settle is the matter of fact. Do men come into existence destitute of that holiness which is essential to

Digitized by Google

their well-being, and in such a state of depravity as certainly leads to a life of sin and an eternity of suffering? The evidence of this fact from the word and providence of God has been summarily laid before you. Hardly any doctrine has proof so abundant and satisfactory. Do you say then, that this fact is not consistent with the perfections of God? This is now the same as to say, that his perfections are not consistent with the ordering of his providence. But who is to decide whether it is consistent for God to do what he actually does? God has decided that it is consistent, *by doing it.* Do you say he has not done it? I ask, why do you say this? Is it because evidence of the fact is wanting? No; you admit other things upon evidence not half so clear. Is not *this* the reason why you say that God has not brought man into existence in the state above described, namely, that you have made up your minds beforehand, that it is not *consistent* for God to do it? And have you not made up your minds thus, merely because you are unable to make out the consistency of it by your own reason? But is this just? Would it be safe to apply this mode of reasoning to other things? Suppose we find it impossible for us by our own reason to prove the justice and propriety of God's "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation;" may we hence conclude that it is not just, and so contradict the express declaration of God, uttered on Mount Sinai and written on a table of stone, and say, he does not visit the iniquities of fathers upon the children? We should not be able by our own reasoning, independently of Revelation, to show the justice of God's commanding the Israelites to cut off the inhabitants of Canaan, both men and women; and that he should be particular in requiring them to destroy *all the children.* Now because we are not able to reason out the justice of this, shall we say it is not just; and then deny that God ever commanded such a thing? In this way we should deny no small part of the Bible, and no small part of the facts which occur in the course of divine providence. We are never to adopt this groundless and impious principle, that what *we* think to be just and right, God will do, and what we think not just and right, God will not do.

Digitized by Google

This is a fair reply, and all that is due to one who denies a well known fact, and takes upon him to say that the doctrine of man's natural depravity is inconsistent with the perfections of God.

But I will now go into a more free and thorough examination of this and other principal objections.

The objector alleges that the common doctrine of man's natural state cannot be reconciled with the rectitude and goodness of God. The doctrine is, that all men come into being in such a moral state, that as soon as they are capable they will certainly and uniformly commit actual sin, or that their moral affections and actions will all be wrong, unless they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit; and that they are thus constituted sinners by the one offence of their first father and in connection with their natural birth. Now in what respects is this doctrine supposed to be inconsistent with the perfections of God? What are the difficulties which attend it in relation to the divine character and government? Does the doctrine imply that God is pleased with sin and misery, inasmuch as he brings men into being in such a state, that they will all certainly sin, and so expose themselves to endless misery?

Reply. This difficulty may be merely apparent, arising from our imperfect knowledge of the case. It may be, that if we could have a perfect view of the subject, as God has, we should be satisfied at once that no such difficulty exists. We must be careful then not to make too much of appearances, especially as we have so often found them fallacious. But let us inquire a little as to the fact. Are there not then sufficient reasons to satisfy us, that God looks upon sin with holy displeasure? Here the Scripture gives us the clearest possible instruction. God in his commands forbids all sin and requires all that is opposite; thus plainly expressing his feelings as to sin and holiness, and showing that he hates the one and loves the other. His law too contains *sanctions*. He promises tokens of his approbation to those who avoid sin, and threatens tokens of his disapprobation to those who commit it. Besides this, he expressly declares, that sin is the

Digitized by Google

abominable thing which his soul hateth; and the whole course of his providence from the beginning of the world to the present moment, has shown his perfect abhorrence of sin and his love of holiness. The very constitution of our minds shows this. The whole work of redemption shows it. The judgment day and the retributions of eternity will show it. The evidence of God's hatred of sin is indescribably great, so that all sinners have reason to fear and tremble in view of his indignation and wrath against sin. We certainly know then that God is so for from being pleased with sin, that there is nothing in the universe that he hates so much. As to suffering, he inflicts it as an expression of his displeasure against sin. Were it not for sin there would be no misery.

The use of these remarks in relation to the difficulty before us is this. As we have the clearest possible evidence that God hates sin, we are sure the fact of our depravity must be consistent with his hatred of sin. As both are obviously and certainly true, we know they are consistent with each other; and the difficulty above supposed is imaginary.

Again; it is said that the doctrine of man's natural depravity is inconsistent with *the benevolence of God.* Benevolence seeks to do good; it aims at the happiness of intelligent beings. How then can it be reconciled with benevolence in God, that he should bring a whole race of intelligent creatures into existence, in a state which will be certainly followed with their disobedience and their consequent punishment? For God to give them existence in such circumstances, would be wholly incompatible with benevolence.

Reply. The alleged inconsistency between our natural depravity and God's benevolence may here also be merely in appearance. When we arrive at that degree of intelligence which will qualify us to judge correctly on this subject, we may see with perfect satisfaction that these two things which now seem to be inconsistent, are perfectly consistent. It may be that angels and saints in heaven see this now. And it may be that some men of illuminated minds and purified hearts on earth see it. And

Digitized by Google

all who have divine teaching may hereafter obtain such clear and extensive knowledge, that they will be so far from thinking the fallen, depraved state of man to be inconsistent with the benevolence of God, that they will look upon it as furnishing, in its bearings and results, the brightest illustration of that benevolence. This must always be a delightful thought to those who sincerely desire to know the truth and are pressing after higher and better views of it. The time will come when we shall have those higher and better views. Present difficulties will vanish. We shall behold in noon-day brightness, the excellence of God's character and the wisdom and goodness of all his dispensations. And we shall look back with humiliation and shame upon the ignorance to which we are now subject, and the mistakes into which we are now continually falling. To a mind laboring in the dark in regard to many important subjects, it is a mighty relief to dwell upon such a reflection as this. The certain expectation of clearer light, and the habit of anticipating it, may have an influence upon us in some respects like what we should experience if we actually possessed that light.

But there is another view to be taken of this difficulty. As the benevolence of God is the benevolence of the Creator and Governor of the universe, it must have respect to the welfare of the whole creation, and must have respect to this, not only for the present time, but through all future time. The benevolence of God, considered in this large sense, which is the only just sense in which the benevolence of such a being is to be considered, cannot be satisfied with any event because it would be beneficial in its influence on a small part of the creation, unless at the same time it would promote the welfare of the whole creation, and would promote it in the highest degree and in the best manner. And if the highest welfare of the whole intelligent creation through all ages to come requires an arrangement less favorable, [yet not unjust], to some part of the creation, or, for the present, even to the whole, than some other arrangement might be; that arrangement will certainly be chosen by a just and benevolent God. Clearly if God is the guardian of the interests of that universe

Digitized by Google

which he has created and which he has destined to exist forever, his benevolence will lead him to adopt those measures which he knows to be most beneficial to those great interests, though not beneficial in the highest conceivable degree to the interests of a particular part. But this, let us always remember, does not imply that God ever adopts a measure which is unjust to a part in order to promote the welfare of the whole. Far otherwise. The supposition that such a Being as God can do an act of injustice, is impious. The supposition is absurd too. God's kingdom is a moral kingdom. It is placed under a moral law. That law requires holiness and justice and truth, and forbids the contrary. And the welfare of the universe is made to depend on the manifested glory of God, which arises especially from the support which he gives to his just and holy law. Now to suppose that God will do an act of injustice to a part of his kingdom for the good of the whole, is in reality to suppose that he will promote the good of the whole by *injuring* the whole. For if God should do an act of injustice, it would countenance the *principle* of injustice. This would destroy his moral character. And the destruction of his character would be the destruction of the welfare of the universe. His glorious character, displayed in a righteous and benevolent law and administration, is the grand security of the interests of his kingdom. It establishes the principles of his moral government, and binds his subjects to him and to one another. That glorious character dishonored and injured, and the universe is undone. I say therefore it is the greatest absurdity to suppose that God will do an act of injustice even to the meanest of his subjects and thus injure that great interest which he aims to promote, and that he will thus *injure* it for the sake of *promoting* it! The view which I take of the subject is this. The only wise God, acting as the guardian of the universe, adopts those just and righteous measures which he sees will be most beneficial to the whole, though they may bring less good to a part than some other measures. Thus he places a part, perhaps even the greater part of our race, in circumstances less favorable to their happiness, than other circumstances would have been. But

Digitized by Google

he does them no injustice. He violates no perfection, not even the most expansive benevolence. The acts of his goodness towards them are constant and numberless; and they have reason to thank and love and obey him with all their hearts forever. And yet it is a fact well known and acknowledged, that the circumstances in which God has placed them are less favorable to their present and eternal happiness, than some other circumstances might have been. Now the all-wise God, the God of love, pursues such a course, (it being in all respects just and righteous,) because he sees that it will ultimately be more conducive to the welfare of the whole, than another measure which would be more advantageous to a part, but less advantageous to the whole. And this is only saying, that God, being infinitely benevolent, prefers a greater amount of happiness in his kingdom to a less. This sovereign wisdom and benevolence of God is exercised in a great part of his operations, as God of the universe.

The sum of my remarks, as they respect the present subject, is this. If God saw that such a constitution of things as this, namely, that all mankind in consequence of the transgression of their common father, should be constituted sinners, and should have their moral existence from the first in a state of depravity; if he saw that such a constitution would in itself be just and suitable as a part of his universal system, and would on the whole be beneficial in its influence upon the great interests of his kingdom; it was not only consistent with his benevolence, but was what his benevolence required, that he should adopt such a constitution. If any one asks what proof we have that God actually viewed such a constitution in such a light; I answer, we have the most satisfactory proof, namely, that he has actually adopted it.

We see here what is incumbent on those who assert that man's existing in a depraved ruined state is inconsistent with the benevolence of God. To support their allegation, they must prove that the fact of man's depravity, considered as involved in God's universal system, will not be made to promote his glory and the ultimate good of his creation. This is what they assert; and this is what they ought to prove. And as it is a very serious

Digitized by Google

matter, they ought to prove it by clear and conclusive evidence. We allow the fact of man's sinfulness to be, *in itself*, altogether and in the highest degree undesirable and deplorable. And we look upon the consequences of the fact, namely, the endless misery of such a multitude of rational beings, with grief and horror. But we hold that all this evil has been, and will be so overruled by the almighty Governor of the world, that it will be the occasion of making the brightest displays of his glorious attributes, and of promoting, in a degree not to be measured by finite minds, the blessedness of his moral empire. Those who bring the objection above named, must prove that sin will not be overruled in this manner. For if God does thus overrule it for good, his benevolence cannot be impeached; and so the objection falls to the ground.

The other principal objection is, that God's bringing us into existence in such a state as the common doctrine implies, is *inconsistent with our being moral, accountable agents, and with the Scripture doctrine of a just and impartial retribution.*

But I ask, how or in what manner is it inconsistent? First; how is it inconsistent with *moral agency?* Is the fact of *our being sinners* thought to be inconsistent with moral agency? But how strange a supposition is this, when our *being sinners* is one of the ways in which our moral agency is exhibited. To suppose that we are sinners without being *moral agents*, is the same as to suppose that we are sinners, without being sinners. Sinners are *bad moral agents*, — moral agents of a wrong character. They are *agents* certainly; and they are *moral* agents, because they have sin; sin being attributable only to a moral agent.

Is then the fact of our being sinners *from the beginning of our rational, moral existence*, in any way inconsistent with moral agency? But why is it any more inconsistent with moral agency for a man to be a sinner at the very commencement of his existence, than at any subsequent period? It is substantially the same thing to be a sinner at one time, as at another. And he who is the subject of sin, whether it be at one period of his existence or at another, is truly a moral agent. If sin exists, it

Digitized by Google

must begin to exist either at the commencement of our being, or at some subsequent time. And the only difference between its commencement at one time and another, must respect its particular form and degree. If sin takes place when the rational and moral powers are in a low and feeble state, it will exist in a low degree, and in a form corresponding with the state of the mind. If it takes place afterwards, when the powers of the mind are increased, its form and degree will be altered, so as to be still correspondent with the state of the mental faculties.

Does any one say, it is inconsistent with the very nature of sin, that it should exist at the beginning of our existence? I ask, why? The answer of Dr. John Taylor and others is, that the first existence of sin must be the *consequence* or *result* of the actual exercise of our moral powers for some time; in other words, that a person must produce sin in himself, or make himself a sinner, by his own antecedent determinations and voluntary actions.

This view of the subject we are now to examine. The supposition is, that a person, in the first instance, makes himself a sinner, or produces in himself the very commencement of sin, *by voluntary determinations and acts;* which determinations and acts must of course precede the existence of the sin which they produce. It is evident that the previous determinations and acts here supposed, must be either right or wrong — either holy or sinful — or else they must be indifferent, that is, neither right nor wrong, and so not moral acts. Now if the previous acts are what they ought to be, i. e. right; then we have the strange supposition, that right volitions and actions in a moral agent produce what is wrong; that his holiness produces sin; that the consequence of his willing and acting right is, that he becomes a sinner. If this is the fact, then, how is a man culpable for *becoming* a sinner, seeing that all those determinations and actions of his which produce sin, are right? According to this notion, what assurance could we have that any being will not soon corrupt himself and make himself a sinner *by acting right?* Indeed why would it not on this supposition be true, that the sure way for a

Digitized by Google

man to produce sin in his own heart, is to do what is right? A singular motive truly to the exercise of holiness!

Take then the other supposition; viz; that a person produces in himself the commencement of moral evil, or makes himself a sinner in the first instance, by previous volitions and actions which are *wrong*. According to this, a person has wrong exercises, and has them voluntarily, before he has any thing wrong; exercises which are sinful before he has any sin. But how long must sinful volitions and acts be continued in a person in order to his beginning to have sin? How long must he be a sinner in order to *become* a sinner? Doubtless the sinful exercises which are there supposed to precede the first existence of sin, occupy time. How long must that time be? — But who does not see the gross absurdity of such a supposition? Sin, instead of being the *product* or *effect* of wrong exercises of mind, lies in them. They themselves are sin.

The only supposition which remains for one who holds the opinion we are examining, is, that a person makes himself a sinner or produces sin in himself, by volitions and acts which are *indifferent*, that is, neither holy nor sinful.

Now inasmuch as the person supposed is a moral agent, and inasmuch as he wills and acts in this case with reference to moral objects; how happens it that his volitions and acts are not of a moral nature? Is it because at the time he is not *capable* of good or evil, and so is not accountable for his actions? It would then come to this, that while a person is incapable of good or evil, and so not accountable for his actions, he does that which corrupts his heart and makes him a sinner. Now is it not a strange supposition, that such amazing consequences — consequences affecting our immortal condition, should depend on our conduct before we are capable of doing either right or wrong? According to this supposition, we are so constituted by our Creator, that we destroy ourselves by our actions before we are capable of acting as moral accountable beings.

But we must look at this matter a little further. A person now puts forth acts which are in no respect wrong, as he is inca-

Digitized by Google

pable of doing wrong, not being as yet, a real moral agent. But these indifferent actions — actions wholly blameless, are soon to result in sin, which is the quality or act of a moral agent. Now by what process or in what manner does he *become* a moral agent? And how does it happen that he becomes so just at this time? Do those indifferent, blameless actions which produce sin, produce moral agency too? And if so, how does it always happen, that moral agency and sin come into existence precisely at the same time? Or does a person become a moral agent a very little time, a moment or so, before he becomes a sinner? Or does he become a sinner a moment or so before he becomes a moral agent?

But it may be said, there is no need of supposing the person *wholly* incapable of moral agency, nor yet, on the other hand, of supposing that those voluntary acts which produce sin are really holy or sinful. They may occupy a middle place between good and bad; and the person may somehow be responsible for them, though he is not really responsible; and through his own fault, as it were, he may, before he sins, do that which will result in sin; and so he may somehow be culpable for making himself a sinner, by doing that which he does before he is a sinner. But on this supposition, does the person *aim* at this result. Does he *intend* to make himself a sinner? Does he know what he is about? And does he mean by what he does, to become a transgressor? Does he choose to be a sinner? and is not this a sin? But if he does not understand the matter, and does not mean to produce this result, but something else, then would it not appear strange that he should be plunged into a state of sin by his own conduct *without his own choice*, and when he thought of no such thing?

But I have not yet done with the opinion, that a person is culpable, not for the present affection or act which is wrong, but for that previous voluntary conduct or free determination of mind which produced the wrong affection or act. Take present love of sin, or enmity against God, which is an affection of the heart. Do you say, the sinner is not culpable for this affection or state

Digitized by Google

of mind, but for those previous acts of mind which occasioned it? You say then, that if this wrong affection should be the very first act of his mind, and so should not be the result of any previous determinations or acts, he would not be blameworthy for it. Though it would be an unsuitable, mistaken affection, and might in a very loose sense, be called sin, he would not be justly answerable for it, because he did not produce it by his own voluntary agency, or by the acts of his free will.

Here it must be noted that the word *will*, as I have remarked in a previous Lecture, is often used in common discourse, and in the sacred Scriptures, to denote the entire moral faculty of the mind. According to this use of the word, all the affections, as well as those acts of the mind more appropriately called volitions, are acts of the will. If this is the view we are to take of the subject, then my question is, "Why are we not answerable for one act of the will as well as another? — for the present act, as well as the previous act?" And then it would seem, according to the supposition now made, that we are answerable for the present act *merely because it leads to a subsequent act*. If this is the case, then it would follow that the evil and blame-worthiness of any affection or act of the mind, does not lie in the act itself, but in the circumstance that it tends to produce other acts which are wrong; — the same holding true of each of those other acts, namely, that its blame-worthiness lies not in itself, or in its own nature, but in the circumstance that it leads on to other acts which are sinful. And then, it is to be noticed, that this influence of the present act of the mind to produce other acts, is generally, to say the least, not a matter of design. Such an effect is not commonly aimed at. In exercising the present affection, our mind has a particulur object in view. Towards that object we put forth an act. We love it, or hate it. We have a desire for it, or an aversion to it. The affection is very simple, being a feeling or emotion of the mind towards that object. Generally we have no other object in view; and certainly we do not commonly take into view the effect of this present act upon future acts of the mind. In truth we do not know what that effect will

Digitized by Google

be, before we have learned it by experience. And suppose we have learned what it will be; still that effect is not the thing we commonly aim at; it is not commonly our intention by this present affection to produce other wrong affections. Thus the supposition would imply, that we are answerable for an affection or act of the mind, on account of a circumstance which does not fall under our voluntary control; which generally is not a matter of choice or intention on our part, and which is often contrary to our choice. For how frequently is it the case with the sinner, that he would be glad to avoid the effect of his present act upon the subsequent state of his mind? He desires not that effect; he dreads it. In the present act of his mind he has quite another object in view. The supposition would therefore make us answerable for a circumstance, (viz. the influence of our present affection or act,) which does not depend on our choice, and which is often contrary to it.

But why is it supposed that we are answerable for the preceding act of mind, and not for the present; and that our blameworthiness lies, not in the present, but in the preceding? Is it because the one is thought to be of a different nature from the other? But why is it thought to be of a different nature? Suppose the present affection of the mind relates to the same object as the past. Suppose that object to be a moral object, and the feeling of the mind towards it to be love and desire, or hatred and aversion. Does the circumstance that one of them follows the other, make any difference in their nature? The present affection may be stronger than the former, and if so it will be more culpable in degree; but is not its nature the same? They are by the supposition both exercises, and equally exercises of the will, taken in the sense above noted. Both relate to the same object. The mind is equally active in both, and equally free from all compulsory influence. Why are they not both of the same nature? And if so, why are we not as answerable for one as for the other?

But the word *will* is used in a more restricted sense by Locke and others. In this sense a volition or an act of the will is that

Digitized by Google

determination of the mind which produces some bodily act, or some other act of the mind, and in which we actually aim at that effect; as when we will to move our limbs, or to exercise the mind in a particular way; and so a volition is distinguished from the affections of love, hatred, compassion, etc. Let us examine the subject with this distinction in view. The opinion we are examining is, that our blame-worthiness does not lie in the present affection, but in the previous volition or choice which led to it; in other words, that we are not answerable for the present wrong affections, but for those acts of our free-will by which we produced or excited these affections. Here I remark,

1. That *volition*, in the sense here intended, *is not the cause of affection*. It does not by its own influence produce it. This is so obviously true, that no man of sound judgment and experience ever expects such a thing, as to excite an affection in his own mind by the direct power of volition. The affection is excited, and from its very nature must be excited, by a suitable object present in the mind's view, not by an act of the will soliciting or requiring it.

2. *Volition*, in this restricted sense, *is the consequence of affection*. All the volitions or active choices of a holy being respecting God, are the effect of his supreme love to God; and the direction of his voluntary agency in respect to other beings arises from his love to them. The particular volitions or active choices of the selfish and worldly arise from their selfish and worldly affections. They choose to do such and such things, because they have such and such dispositions and desires. Now as the affections are the source of particular volitions, we should naturally conclude that the affections themselves are blame-worthy as really as the volitions which flow from them.

3. Suppose the affections to be in some way produced by previous volitions; still what is there in those volitions which should make us answerable for them, more than for the affections which are supposed to be thus connected with them? What is there either in the nature or circumstances of those acts of the mind, which should render us praise-worthy or blame-worthy for

Digitized by Google

them, more than for these? It cannot be said that we have less agency in the affections than in what are more appropriately called volitions. Nothing can be conceived in which our minds are more truly active, or active in a higher degree, than in love, desire, hatred, and other affections. Nor can it be said that the volitions are more *voluntary* than the affections. The word *voluntary* is most properly applied to that which is *the effect* of choice, or which takes place *in consequence* of a volition. Now in this sense the affections are not strictly voluntary; i. e. they do not take place as the immediate effects or consequences of volition; they do not rise in the mind in direct obedience to an act of the will. When writers call the affections *voluntary*, it is because they do not make the distinction above noticed between the affections and volitions, but regard them all as acts of the will. Accordingly when they call the affections voluntary, they do not mean to imply that they are consequent upon an act of the will, but that they are themselves acts of the will. If regarded in this light, the affections are as voluntary as volitions, both being acts of the will. *Volitions* are not voluntary in the other sense, which I consider the more exact sense of the word; i. e. they do not flow from a previous act of the will, but from the influence of those inducements or motives under which the mind is placed. Taking the word therefore, in either sense, we find the affections as voluntary as the volitions. Why then are we not responsible for them? I say this with reference to those who call every thing for which we are accountable, voluntary.

I have not thought it necessary to expose the opinion we have been considering, as Edwards does, in his work on the Will, by showing that, if adopted, it would exclude all virtue and vice from the world. His reasoning on this subject is a very striking example of the *reductio ad absurdum*. No one can resist the force of his argument in any other way than by refusing to consider it.

But I have still another inquiry. Is not the mind as much the *author* of the affections, as of the volitions? Does it not as truly originate them? I introduce this question for the sake of those

Digitized by Google

who dwell much upon the idea that a man must be the *author* of his own actions in order to be accountable.

The question may be quickly answered. If by being the *author* or *originator* of its affections, is meant that the mind *really exercises them, or that they are truly and perfectly the acts of the mind;* then the mind is evidently the author or originator of all its affections, as well as its volitions. But if by originating our affections or volitions, is meant that we produce them, or bring them into being by any thing in the mind distinct from its affections or volitions; then I contend that we cannot derive from our consciousness, or from any other source, the least evidence that we do originate our affections or volitions. We are conscious of the acts of the mind and of nothing else. These acts of the mind have indeed important mutual relations; but as to the affections, it is not a fact that they are properly produced or originated by any other mental acts. The mind, in the circumstances in which it is placed, exercises or puts forth its affections; in view of suitable objects or motives it acts in the way of loving, hating, etc. This is the whole history of the case. The mind exists as an agent, rational, free, moral. Under the influence of circumstances, that is, with various objects or inducements presented before it, it acts as it does. This is all that any man ever observed in himself, or witnessed in others, or read in history; and all which any man can conceive.

We have now examined the position of Dr. John Taylor, Dr. Ware and others, that the first existence of sin must be the result of previous voluntary determinations or acts of the will, and accordingly that it is inconsistent with the nature of sin that it should exist at the beginning of our moral existence; and we have found this position liable to objections in every point of view. The fact is, that moral good and evil, virtue and vice, lie in the affections or mental acts themselves, considered in their own nature. It were easy to prove that this is the case, and that on any other principle there can be no such thing as virtue or vice, holiness or sin, in the universe. But this has been so fully proved by Edwards and others, and is indeed so perfectly obvious to our own con-

Digitized by Google

sciences, that it may properly be taken as a settled matter. Here then we come to the conclusion of our reasoning on this point. As soon as a rational being has a disposition or affection which is of a moral nature, he is holy or sinful. Whatever may be the antecedents or circumstances, the occasions or excitements of affection, he is worthy of praise or blame as soon as he has it. At its very first existence it is in itself right or wrong. If it is love to God or benevolence to man, it is right, and he who has it, is virtuous and praise-worthy. If it is enmity to God, or selfishness, it is wrong, and he who has it is culpable. And a person is as truly worthy of praise or blame for the first moral disposition or affection, as he can be for any subsequent one; because it is of the same nature. Subsequent affections may be increased or diminished in strength, and circumstances may attend them which render them culpable in a higher or lower degree. But the first affection, being of the same nature, is as truly culpable as any following affections. The fact of its being first makes no alteration in regard to its desert. So that the doctrine of our *native* depravity, or our sinfulness from the beginning of our moral existence, is in no way inconsistent with the nature of sin, or with our free, moral, and accountable agency.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXVII.

EXERCISES OF DEPRAVED AFFECTION COMMENCE EARLY.

MEN of a speculative turn of mind frequently increase the difficulties attending the subject of native depravity by their injudicious attempts to remove them. They aspire to be wise above that which is written. They frame theories, which shed darkness rather than light upon the revealed doctrine; — theories which instead of explaining the fact of our degenerate state, or strengthening our belief of it, cause the fact itself to be doubted, or at least render the belief of it less productive of good. If we find this to be the effect of any hypothesis, if, in consequence of our regarding it with favor we are less affected with the fearful fact of our fallen and ruined state; we ought at once to dismiss the hypothesis, by whomsoever recommended, and to content ourselves with the serious belief of the simple truth made known by Scripture and experience, applying ourselves earnestly to the appointed means of deliverance from the evils of our apostasy.

Some of the philosophical theories which have been adopted for the purpose of explaining the fact of our natural depravity, have more appearance of truth than others. But even as to those which have most to recommend them, long experience has taught me the following lessons: — 1; not to maintain any philosophical or metaphysical theory too confidently, as all such theories are of human origin, and therefore fallible; 2; not to contend for any one of them as though it were *exclusively* entitled to our consideration inasmuch as it may be no more entitled to consideration

Digitized by Google

than some others; and 3; not to set myself against any philosophical theories too absolutely, as no one of them can be found, which does not contain a portion of truth. — Happy, thrice happy shall we be, when we arrive at that better world, where the labor of forming theories and opposing errors shall be ended, and where all the truths now held by the different classes of Christians or contained in different systems, and other truths too sublime to be discovered in the present state, shall come before us in all their harmony and lustre, and shall unceasingly illuminate our enlarged and perfected minds.

But in perfect consistency with the precautions which have been suggested, I think I may safely lay down the following propositions, not as hypotheses, but as matters of fact; namely, first, that children begin *very early* to exercise their intellectual and moral faculties, and that among the earliest things which we can observe in them or recollect in ourselves, are incipient exercises of wrong affection; and secondly, *that wrong affection must be supposed to commence in children before they are capable of clearly manifesting it by outward signs.* Or to express it all summarily; children manifest wrong feeling very early; and it is but reasonable to suppose that *they begin to exercise it in their hearts before they are capable of manifesting it.*

I do not take upon me to determine *how* early children begin to show sinful feelings by outward signs; for all appearances indicate, that there is in this respect a great difference among them. And I am far from taking upon me to determine *how* long sinful feeling exists within them before they manifest it outwardly; for in this respect too, they doubtless differ from each other; and in regard to any of them at the period referred to, we have no means of discovering the incipient, elementary actings of sinful affection in the recesses of the heart, where the eye of God sees the essence of all sin. All that I venture to affirm is, the reasonableness of supposing that sinful feeling exists, for a longer or shorter time, prior to its distinct manifestation.

Do you ask why I attach special importance to this view of the subject? I answer, generally, that it is on many accounts,

Digitized by Google

desirable to have a right conception of the facts pertaining to our apostate, ruined state. It is desirable that we should know the truth. But I have a more particular reason, for attaching importance to this view of the subject, namely, that it has an obvious bearing upon the justice and equity of the divine administration. For if it is admitted to be a fact that children exercise wrong feeling very early; if they inwardly transgress the law written on their hearts by wrong affections before they are capable of showing those affections by external signs; then the evils which come upon those children who fall under this description, are as manifestly consistent with the moral attributes of God, as those which come upon adult transgressors. The evidence that the penal evil which is inflicted upon the subjects of God's government is consistent and equitable, does not depend upon the degree or the form of their guilt, but upon its existence. If at a period not far distant from their birth, transgression of moral law is in any way found in them; if while it is hidden from the eye of their fellow men, and while it comes not within the reach of their own efforts at recollection in subsequent life, it is still seen in its essential deformity by the eye of Omniscience; then moral law extends its rightful authority over them, and its penalty holds them in its grasp. And you can no more question the justice of penal infliction here, than in any other case of transgression. As soon as those who have a moral nature, begin to be the subjects of unholy affection, however ignorant we may be of the fact; so soon do they fall under the just penalty of the law, although they have "not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," nor after the exact similitude of the transgression of any adult person. Sin, wherever it takes place, and whatever its form or degree, incurs a just punishment, the nature and measure of the punishment being always determined by the infallible judgment of the Supreme Legislator.

The remarks I have made, you will observe, have no relation to children before they are in God's view chargeable with the beginning of moral evil, — before sin in some form and in some degree exists in their hearts. If we refer to others, and would account

Digitized by Google

for it that those suffer pain and death, in whom God sees nothing which has the nature of sin, nothing which his unerring justice can regard as a transgression of moral law; we must resort to some other principle. According to the Apostle, "*death* comes by sin." And if it does not come by the sin of those who suffer death, it must come by the sin of some other person to whom they stand in an important relation. This however cannot be particularly considered at present.

My object now is, to obviate objections which may seem to lie against the proposition laid down above respecting children in early life, and to suggest some reasons in its support.

There is certainly nothing strange or unreasonable in the supposition that children have feelings which are morally wrong, before they are able to make them known to others, either by words or by other outward signs. They cannot do this before they have attained to a considerable degree of strength and activity, both bodily and mental; and this requires time. But how soon the necessary strength and activity are attained, we have no direct means of knowing. We cannot look into their minds so as to discern exactly what their condition is, or when they begin to be capable of those mental acts which are the elementary principles of a sinful character. Hence in forming a judgment on this point, aside from the general teachings of Scripture, we must diligently use the scanty means of knowledge which we possess, humbly seeking the truth, if haply we may feel after it and find it.

Now it is clear that a little child often makes an effort to express to others some strong feelings which struggle within him, before he has learned the use of external signs, so as to be able intelligibly to express those feelings to others. The fact that the feelings cannot at present be distinctly expressed is certainly no proof that they do not exist.

Nor is the *incapacity* of a child *to receive particular instruction* from parents and others respecting moral and religious subjects, any certain proof that he is incapable of moral feelings. The very constitution of his mind, the "law written on his heart,"

Digitized by Google

may, without instruction from others, early render him capable of moral feeling. Without any particular instruction, there may be something external or internal, which will elicit emotions; and these emotions, though existing only in their incipient state and in an exceedingly low degree, may be the original elements of character. No one is authorized to say that the mind cannot have such emotions before it is capable of instruction from without. Indeed the elements of knowledge must of necessity exist in the mind, before it can receive instruction. Instruction on intellectual subjects does not originate the first intellectual acts, but presupposes them, refers to them, and makes use of them. The same is true of moral instruction. It does not originate the first moral emotions, nor communicate the first moral perceptions; but evidently proceeds on the supposition that they have already begun to exist. And it is of no small consequence that we should remember this, and should well consider what place our agency holds in the instruction we give in early life. Much is done in the mind before *our* work can begin. There must be various intellectual and moral acts as elements of knowledge, and as materials for us to operate upon. Surely then we cannot prove that a little child has no moral emotions, because he is incapable of receiving instruction from human teachers. He has not yet learned the meaning of words and other signs, which must be used by teachers as the means of giving instruction. But his mind itself, though not capable of receiving instruction in these ways, may be capable of perceptions, and moral emotions; and as these perceptions are the incipient elements of knowledge, the moral emotions attending them are the incipient elements of moral character.

Again our *not being able in after life to recollect that we had moral affections so early*, is no certain proof that we had none. The recollection of those acts of our mind which took place in past time, depends much on the strength which our mental faculties had at the time when the acts took place, and on the degree of attention we gave to those mental acts. The mind must make considerable improvement, before it can retain the impression of

Digitized by Google

its thoughts and feelings for any length of time. A little child often has a memory sufficient to recall his mental acts for a few minutes or hours; and yet those acts may afterwards entirely escape his recollection. Who can count up the number of thoughts and feelings which a child evidently has in that early period of life, to which his memory afterwards can never reach? Certainly it can be no sufficient proof of our not having had moral affections in early childhood, that we cannot now recollect them. Who will say that this want of recollection is a proof that we had no moral affections during the two or three first years of our life? Generally we can no more recollect what took place in our minds when we were two years old, than what took place six or twelve months earlier. Evidently then we may have had moral affections in our early childhood, notwithstanding our inability to recall them. When we had them, our consciousness of them was in proportion to their strength. But now we can recollect neither that consciousness, nor the affections to which it related.

The circumstance that a young child has *no explicit, formal knowledge of God's law*, is no proof that he is incapable of moral affections. A child is without such knowledge till he becomes capable of receiving religious instruction. But how can he receive instruction before he has learned the use of language and other signs through which instruction is communicated? No one can suppose that a child ordinarily obtains any definite and correct ideas of God and his law during the first two or three years of his life. But it cannot surely be thought that a child ordinarily lives two or three years without any wrong feelings. It is often the case that the minds of children are wholly neglected, and that they continue for a long time in ignorance of the character and law of God; or if they have any impressions made on their minds respecting these subjects, the impressions are generally erroneous. But who supposes that children and youth, during all the years of their ignorance and error, are incapable of any feelings either right or wrong? And how is it with those who are brought up in heathen darkness, and have no proper conceptions of God and his law? The Apostle tells us, "they are a law to themselves,"

Digitized by Google

that "they have the law written on their hearts," i. e. they have the principles of law imprinted on their minds; they have moral faculties and moral perceptions. Possessed as they are of a moral *nature*, their being destitute of any such explicit and formal knowledge of God's law as right instruction gives, does not render them incapable of good and evil. When converts among the heathen review their former lives, they see many of their feelings and actions to have been sinful, though in their heathenish state they thought nothing of them. In view of these things, who is authorized to say that the mind of a young child is incapable of moral feelings, because it is without any explicit knowledge of God and his law? Accordingly those passages of Scripture which speak of little children as having no knowledge of good and evil, furnish no conclusive proof that they are incapable of moral affections; because such passages may be understood to speak of children in that comparative sense which is common in the word of God. Even some adult persons, who are evidently sinners, and are spoken of as deserving a degree of punishment, ("few stripes,") are still represented as *not knowing their Lord's will.* They have no such knowledge as others have, — no clear, definite, formal knowledge, which comes from correct religious instruction. And if this may be the case with adult persons, who are acknowledged to be capable, though in a lower degree than others, of sinful feelings, why may it not be the case with little children? How can their being represented as having no knowledge, certainly prove that this is not the case with them? It must however be kept in mind that, as they are in such a state of ignorance, they are capable of moral affection only in a low degree. Their emotions must be regarded as only incipient and elementary, having indeed the nature, but far from having the form or the strength, of the emotions belonging to adult years. So the first little shoot which arises from the opening seed, is in nature the same vegetable substance and has the same vegetable life with the stately oak which it afterwards becomes.

The above are the considerations which have occurred to me against the position that the mind in early childhood is capable of

Digitized by Google

moral feelings. Few will think that such considerations amount to a valid and conclusive objection. And if they do not amount to a valid objection, then no one has a right to assume that a little child is incapable of emotions which are of a moral nature, and no one has a right to proceed on the ground of such an assumption, either in pursuing a course of reasoning, or in interpreting the word of God. If a man comes to those passages of Scripture which teach that all are sinners, he cannot properly assume that all little children must be excepted on account of their supposed incapacity to have affections morally wrong. To reason in this way would be to assume that which is not self-evident, and which cannot be proved.

This then is the position which I would maintain, namely, that no man can take it for granted, that children in early life are incapable of emotions which are of a moral nature. I pretend not to defend my position by direct and positive proof. Let me however remind you that there are various declarations of Scripture as to the universality of sin and its consequences, which cannot be understood to exclude all children. But it may answer a good purpose, to advert more particularly to some considerations in favor of my position, that children are very early capable of the beginning of moral emotions; still not attempting to do what no man is able to do, that is, to decide *how* early this capability of moral emotions exists.

1. A child is considered by all sober men as having at a very early period a rational and immortal soul, a mind endued with intellectual and moral powers. Such a mind, from its very nature must soon be capable of intelligence and moral affection? Besides this, the little child possesses those bodily organs which are intimately connected with the mind, and which under the present constitution of things, are always concerned in the exercise of thought and feeling. Now the fact that a child is from the beginning possessed of a mind, together with the organs of thought and feeling, would seem to imply that he must, not long after the commencement of life, be capable of thought and feeling, capable of it, I mean in some small degree. As a mind exists with its

Digitized by Google

proper bodily organs, who can suppose that there is any thing which will necessarily prevent its powers from beginning to unfold themselves at a very early poriod? They must begin to do this sometime. And why not near the commencement of life? Is it quite reasonable to suppose that a thing of so active a nature as the mind, with all its faculties and its bodily organs, though in a very feeble state, should remain perfectly dormant, not only for months, but for years; especially when it is considered that there are very early in life, various bodily sensations which are suited to rouse the mind to action?

2. It agrees best with common analogy to suppose that feeling in so low a degree as to be imperceptible to others, begins very early. The development of all our corporeal and mental powers begins in this manner. And the same gradual and at the time imperceptible development takes place in the vegetable and animal world.

3. But a very short time passes after the commencement of life, before a child becomes capable of showing evident signs of feeling. And have we not reason to suppose that feeling, as well as thought, exists still earlier? A child gives indications of various feelings and strives to utter them, long before he is able to do it in the usual way. And is it reasonable to suppose that the very first feelings which exist in the mind, have the same degree of strength with those which are first plainly indicated by outward signs? Is it not rather probable that the first emotions of the heart, the first buddings of affection, take place some time previously to their manifestation, and that by a gradual process they acquire an ability to express themselves by intelligible signs?

4. To suppose that children are in some small degree moral agents and have incipient moral emotions very early, agrees best with the general representations of Scripture and the general aspect of things in divine providence; both of which indicate that the offspring of human parents are human beings, endued with the same nature, belonging to the same race, and under the same moral administration with their parents, and early possessing the

Digitized by Google

elements of the same character. All these indications of the word and providence of God would seem incongruous, if human beings, for a long time after the commencement of their life, were totally destitute of moral affections and moral qualities, and of all actual relation to a moral government. But if they are considered as having, very early, some feeble beginnings of moral affection, and of course some elements of moral character; it would help to make the representations of Scripture and the conduct of Providence appear consistent and just. This view of the subject would do something towards relieving a difficulty which is generally thought to attend the fact that children suffer and die. Some suppose they suffer and die as irrational animals do, without any reference to a moral constitution, or the principles of a moral government. A strange supposition indeed, that *human beings* should for a considerable time be ranked with brute animals! Children are represented in a very different light in the word of God. Now this strange supposition is made on the assumption, that little children are capable of no wrong feelings, that they have nothing in any degree of the nature of moral evil. For if they have this even in the lowest degree, — if the eye of God sees in them any emotions, however feeble, which are in their nature wrong, and so are the commencement of a sinful character; then they do not suffer as innocent, sinless beings. And we are to understand the affirmations of the Apostle that "by the offence of one all are constituted sinners," and that "death comes upon all men because that all have sinned," as applicable to the human race at large. In like manner we are to understand the declaration, that men are "by nature children of wrath," and that "no one can see the kingdom of heaven without being born again," as relating to all mankind — no exception being made by us, where none is made by the word of God. If we admit that children have a degree of personal sinfulness as soon as they are intelligent, moral beings, and that they begin to be intelligent moral beings at a very early period; then they evidently need the regenerating Spirit of God, as really as others do, to make them holy. And so they come clearly and fully under the dispensation, in which

Digitized by Google

Christ is exhibited as dying for sinners, and saving that which was lost; and prayer may be offered up for their renewal by the Spirit with as much propriety as for the renewal of those who have come to maturity.

Thus far we have confined our remarks to children who are in some degree the subjects of inward exercises which are corrupt and sinful, and are in the sight of God really transgressors of moral law. In respect to God's treatment of this class of human beings, we have found no more difficulty, than in his treatment of adult sinners. They are all transgressors of the divine law, and are all subjected to its righteous penalty.

But you ask how we are to regard infant children before they are in any way transgressors of moral law?

I acknowledge that aside from the teachings of God's word and providence I should be totally unable to give any satisfactory reply to such a question. Reason unenlightened from above, could never solve the difficulties by which the subject is encompassed. And whenever, from an over-weening confidence in our own intellectual faculties, we push our inquiries a single step beyond the plain truths which we learn from revelation and experience, we involve ourselves in darkness and perplexity. If we would maintain the character of consistent Christians, we must avoid all conjectures and unwarrantable speculations, and be content with the knowledge which God has given us, and must in our faith and practice conform exactly to his word, neither falling short of it, nor attempting to go beyond it.

It is clear that if infant children are for a time entirely free from all moral affections which are sinful, they do not during that time suffer pain and death as a token of God's displeasure against *them*. Their suffering evil cannot be regarded as a just recompense for what they have done, inasmuch as they have done nothing. It is clear then that if their suffering is to be regarded as punishment, it must be for the sin of some other person; and if so, it must doubtless be, according to Rom. 5: 12–19, for the sin of Adam. It is easy to see, that the pain and death of children may be the punishment of a parent for his sin. It is often

Digitized by Google

and very justly regarded in this light in the common course of providence. And the ruin of Adam's posterity might be meant as a righteous judgment of God *for his offence*. He must have felt it to be so, and so far as he was concerned, there certainly was no injustice. He deserved punishment; and he could not complain if it came upon him in the way of sorrow and distress for the sufferings of his descendants.

A respectable English writer says, that "God's inflicting such evils in consequence of the fall of Adam, is calculated to serve purposes of the very highest magnitude. What event in the whole universe, if we except the death of the Redeemer, is more calculated to display the Almighty's hatred of sin, than his inflicting for one sin of one man, calamities so tremendous? And what event in the whole universe, if we again except the death of the Redeemer, is more calculated to display the glory of his character, than his doing this in perfect consistency with the strictest rules of moral equity?" But how is this proceeding just to Adam's posterity? What have they done before they commit sin, to merit pain and death, — what have they done to merit the evil of existing without original righteousness and with a nature prone to sin? Here our wisdom fails. We apply in vain to human reason or to human consciousness for an answer. We are perplexed and confounded, and find no resting place until we seize the sublime truth, that God's ways are not our ways nor his thoughts our thoughts, and that all his acts and all his appointments are right. Were we, in the exercise of our own reason, independently of revelation, to sit in judgment on the question, whether the posterity of Adam shall be brought into a state of sin and misery by his offence, we should certainly decide in the negative. And so many do decide. But God has not made us judges. The case lies wholly out of our province. Our duty is not to direct the great concerns of the creation, but to acquiesce in God, and to believe with all the heart, that whatever he does is perfectly right, and not less right, because contrary to the dictates of our fallible minds. And while in the light of revelation we know that our being brought into a state of sin and misery by the offence of

Digitized by Google

our federal head is just and right on God's part, we know also that it is nowise unjust to us. Although in our ignorance, we might think it a hard and oppressive condition of our existence, that we should be, from the first, in a depraved and suffering state; still, in the light of divine truth, we are sure that our being in such a state is so under the holy and benevolent superintendence of God, as not to interfere in the least with any of his attributes, or with any of the principles of a righteous probation, or a righteous retribution. There is nothing in our probation which can be a matter of reasonable complaint, and there will be nothing in the coming state of retribution, which our own consciences will not pronounce to be perfectly consistent with justice and equity.

Thus while in the mere use of our own reason we find the depths of divine providence unfathomable, we are taught as Christians, to confide unconditionally in the authority of God's word, and quietly to acquiesce in his sovereign wisdom.

This then shall be our inquiry, namely, what has God taught us respecting the state of infant children before actual sin commences? What are the revealed facts in the case?

For the present, let us see what light is cast on the subject by that excellent compend of religious truth, the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. Here we are taught, as we are also in Romans, 5: 12—19, that "the fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery;" in other words, that human beings, without exception, are in a state of sin and misery in consequence of the fall. Had not Adam fallen, his posterity would not have been in such a state. It is through his offence that this evil comes upon them. The manner in which this fallen state of mankind is related to the fall of Adam, is thus set forth in the Catechism. "All mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, *sinned in him and fell with him* in his first transgression." To this statement many objections are made; and human reason, turning away from the instructions of God's word, may make objections to any statement however scriptural, on this or any other subject. But does not the statement, candidly interpreted, convey an important

Digitized by Google

truth? The language is indeed free and artless, and should be met with candor and liberality. And the same is true of many expressions of Holy Writ. And if, instead of treating the sacred volume with due reverence and fairness, we labor, as infidels do, to put the worst possible construction upon it, we may think we discover in it many principles totally false and pernicious, and totally adverse to justice and goodness.

Take for example, Hebrews 7: 9, 10. The writer says, that Levi the son of Jacob, that is, the tribe, of Levi, which contained the Priesthood, "*paid tithes in Abraham.*" What! paid tithes before he was born? Yes, he paid tithes long before he began to live. The explanation which the inspired writer gives of the matter is, that Levi was in the loins of his great-grandfather, Abraham, when he paid tithes to Melchizedec. In other words, he was a descendant of Abraham, and because he stood in that relation, it is said that "he paid tithes *in Abraham.*" Here the principle of *representation* is plainly brought before us by the sure word of God. In the matter of paying tithes to Melchizedec Abraham was the representative of Levi, and hence of the tribe of Levi. As Abraham's paying tithes to Melchizedec was a manifest acknowledgment of inferiority; so the tribe of Levi, descending from Abraham and consecrated to the priestly office, was inferior to our great High Priest, who was particularly prefigured by Melchizedec. Levi, containing the Jewish Priesthood, was in this way shown to be in a state of inferiority to the Priest typified by Melchizedec, just as though he himself had paid tithes to that superior personage. He paid tithes in Abraham *virtually*. Abraham in that affair, acted for him. On the principle of representation, Abraham's act was his. It was not strictly his *personal act*, but it was as if it had been his; — it was his by *imputation;* it was *reckoned* to him. You will particularly notice the language here used by the inspired writer. He does not express himself *roundly*, as though he was declaring what was literally and strictly true. His language is, — "And *as I may so say*, Levi also, who *receiveth* tithes, *paid* tithes *in Abraham;* for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedec met him." — *As I*

Digitized by Google

may so say." — It softens the expression, and shows that it is to be construed reasonably, and not to be pressed too far. But, construed reasonably, it conveys an important truth. The consequence of what Abraham did in paying tithes, reached Levi. Abraham's art was imputed to him, that is, reckoned to his account. In relation to the object of the sacred writer, it was as though Levi himself had done the significant act which Abraham did in paying tithes. Speaking freely, we say, *Levi* did it. "*He paid tithes in Abraham.*"

Now the phraseology in the Catechism is exactly like that which has just been quoted from Scripture, and is to be understood in the same manner. Adam was the father and the constituted head of all mankind. According to the language of the inspired writer, they were in the loins of their father when he transgressed; that is, they are the descendants of sinning Adam. And as he was their federal head and representative, they *virtually*, or in *effect*, did what he did. — "*As we may so say*," "they sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression." So the Scripture expresses it; "through the offence of one, the many die;" and "through that one offence judgment came upon all men to condemnation." When our first father sinned, he lost the image and favor of God, and incurred the penalty of the law. And his posterity share with him in these penal consequences of his offence. They partake of the "*guilt*" of his first sin; that is, they are subject to the evils which he incurred by sin; through the righteous judgment of God, they are destitute of original righteousness, and their whole nature is corrupt. And in the result they are actually sinners; sinners as really and certainly, as though they had existed with Adam, and had sinned when he sinned. They experienced the evil consequences of what he did. Thus "the fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery." *Through the offence of one they were all constituted sinners, and judgment came upon them*, as sinners, to *condemnation.*

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXVIII.

INNATE DISPOSITION OR PROPENSITY TO SIN.

THE particular view of young children presented in the last Lecture, covers only a part of the ground to be surveyed. The question remains, *what is the state of the infant mind previously to the commencement of sinful affection.*

In the treatment of this subject, I shall avoid strong affirmations, and the announcement of over-confident opinions. The subject is abstruse and difficult, lying, as it does in many respects, beyond the sphere of our knowledge. We have neither the *means* of understanding it perfectly, nor the necessary *capacity* for this, whatever means might be afforded us. On such a subject our best conceptions will be likely to be mingled with error, and the conclusions which may now appear to us most certain, may be found on further enquiry, to result from premises which are partly or wholly false. I would remember these remarks myself; and instead of appearing before the public as a strenuous advocate of any one philosophical theory, exclusively of every other, I would treat the opinions of all wise and good men with respect. And though I have been considering the subject before us for a long time, I would still place myself in company with those who are *inquirers after the truth*, who are aspiring after a better understanding of Scripture, and a clearer light than has yet shone upon the minds of Christians.

The depravity of man has *commonly* been considered as con-

Digitized by Google

sisting originally in *a wrong disposition*, or *a corrupt nature*, which is antecedent to any sinful emotions, and from which, as an inward source, all sinful emotions and actions proceed.

It seems to me that there are many considerations in favor of this opinion.

We have evident occasion for the use of such words as *disposition*, *inclination*, *propensity*, *nature*. Were there no such words in our language, we should be sensible of the deficiency, and, for the purpose of reasoning and common discourse, should be compelled to introduce them. Without words of such import, how could you express what you often wish to express, as to the *habitual character* of an intelligent being? You say, such a man is *avaricious*. But it may be that he is not now putting forth avaricious *acts* of mind. For though he is a very avaricious man, he may at present be wholly occupied with thoughts and feelings of another kind. But who considers this as a reason for not calling him an avaricious man? What then is your meaning, when you call a man *avaricious*, while his mind is engrossed with other objects, and is at present free from all avaricious thoughts and feelings? Do you mean merely, that he has indulged avaricious desires and followed avaricious practices *in times past?* But this *alone* would not be a conclusive reason for calling him avaricious *now;* because he may have reformed, and may now possess a better spirit. By calling the man avaricious, do you then mean, that he will certainly have avaricious feelings *hereafter*, when the objects of avaricious desire shall come before his mind? But the mere fact, however certain, that he will have such feelings at *a future time* is not a sufficient reason for calling him avaricious *now;* because those future feelings may come in consequence of a change in his character. It was certain that Adam, though at first holy, would become a sinner. But this surely was no reason for calling him a sinner while he remained holy. It is also certain, that some who are at present impenitent sinners, will hereafter become Christians. But shall we therefore count them among Christians now? If a man is with propriety called avaricious, it must be on account of something which belongs to him

Digitized by Google

at present. He must either have avaricious feelings at the present time, or must have that in his mind from which avaricious feelings will naturally arise. There must be in the state of his mind an aptitude to such feelings, a foundation for such exercises. This aptitude or foundation is the very thing which is commonly called *disposition*, *propensity*, *inclination*, or *principle of action*. Edwards calls it a "principle of nature;" which he explains to be, "that foundation which is laid in nature for any particular kind of exercises,—so that for a man to exert the faculties of his mind in that kind of exercises may be said to be his nature." Dr. Dwight calls it "a cause of moral action in intelligent beings,"—"a cause, which to us is wholly unknown, except that its existence is proved by its effects."—"We speak of *human nature as sinful*," he says, "intending, *not the actual commission of sin*, but a general characteristic of man, under the influence of which he has committed sins heretofore, and is prepared and prone to commit others."—"With the same meaning in our minds, we use the phrases, *sinful propensity*, *corrupt heart*, *depraved mind*, and the contrary ones."—"When we use these kinds of phraseology, we intend that a reason really exists why one mind will be the subject of holy volitions, and another of sinful ones. We do not intend to assert that any one or any number of the volitions has been or will be, holy or sinful,—nor do we refer immediately to *actual volitions* at all. Instead of this, we mean to indicate a state of mind, out of which holy volitions in one case may be fairly expected to arise, and sinful ones in another: such a state, as that, if it were to be changed, and the existing state of a holy mind were to become the same with that of a sinful mind, its volitions would henceforth be sinful, and vice versa. This *state* is the cause which I have mentioned, a cause the existence of which must be admitted, unless we acknowledge it to be a perfect causality that any volition is sinful rather than holy." It will be seen that Dwight uses the word *volitions* in the large sense, including the affections or emotions.

To return to the case of the avaricious man. Most certainly it cannot be proper to attribute this character to him, except for

Digitized by Google

that which really belongs to him *now*, — a present quality or state of his mind. Whatever avaricious feelings may hereafter be excited in his mind; still if they do not arise from something wrong in the present state of his heart, — if he is now entirely free from all propensity or aptitude to such feelings; there would be no justice in calling him avaricious. The man whom you call avaricious, envious, or revengeful, may not now exhibit avarice, envy, or revenge, in any acts of mind; why then do you represent him as sustaining such a character? What do your thoughts fix upon, as a reason for applying these epithets to him? Is it not that very thing, which is commonly called *propensity*, *disposition*, or *state of mind?* Though he is not the subject of any present feelings of avarice, envy, or revenge, his attention being occupied with other things; he has an invariable propensity towards them, and will at once exercise them, when a favorable opportunity occurs. This disposition or aptitude of mind is that which is commonly regarded as the foundation of a man's character.

Now we have abundant evidence that a disposition or propensity to sin, understood as above, exists in the human mind from the beginning. Some, who do not fully agree with Dr. Dwight and other Orthodox divines in their reasoning on this point, still hold that man's nature since the fall is such, that he certainly will sin, and that his nature is the *cause* or *reason* of his sinning. By *nature* I suppose they mean the same as is commonly meant by *disposition*, *propensity*, or *tendency to sin.* It has been the common doctrine of Orthodox churches in this country and in Europe, that all the posterity of Adam are the subjects of *natural depravity*, or *depravity of nature*, or an *innate tendency* or *bias to sin.* This quality or state of mind clearly belongs to man from the commencement of his being; and this is what is more generally intended by *original sin;* although this phrase is meant also to include the fact, that depravity and ruin come upon us as the consequence of Adam's sin. But the particular question with which we are now concerned is, whether this settled, universal propensity to sin in

Digitized by Google

the posterity of Adam may not be a reason for their being denominated sinners. Here let us advert to the principles already laid down. If a man shows a disposition to covetous feelings and practices, we call him a covetous man. And if we could know, at the beginning of his life, that he has such a disposition,—a disposition which will uniformly and certainly develop itself in covetous desires and practices; we should say, he has the grand element of a covetous character; he is a *young miser*. And if we knew that any man had a decided disposition to commit murder, whether he had ever acted it out or not; we should not hesitate to ascribe to him the character of a *murderer*. We should say, he is a murderer *in heart*, and a murderer *in the sight of God*. And if we had evidence that the whole race of man were born with a disposition to this particular crime, that they were universally inclined to commit murder; we should speak of them as universally *a race of murderers;* and we should regard them as murderers *virtually*, not only before they had perpetrated any murderous deed, but before they had conceived any direct, formal *purpose* to do it. Their having an *inclination* or *propensity* to such a deed of wickedness would be all that the case required. The same might be said of other forms of moral evil. Now there is evidently in every human being, *a disposition to sin*, a state of mind from the beginning of life, which will certainly and uniformly lead him to transgress the divine law, whatever his outward circumstances may be, and whatever causes may operate upon him, either external or internal, except the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. And the existence from the first of such a disposition in man has generally been thought sufficient to justify us in representing him as by nature depraved, sinful, and lost, and, at the very beginning of his existence, needing regeneration, and all the blessings of redemption. This view of the subject shows regeneration to be substantially the same thing, at whatever period of life it may take place. It is the giving of *a new heart*. Man's unrenewed heart is, from the beginning, *depraved*, *unholy*, *prone to sin*. This is his natural character. The child Jesus was never in

Digitized by Google

any degree prone to sin. He had never any disposition or state of mind that tended to sin in any of its forms. He had "no evil principle,"—"was not at all under the influence of any native depravity." For any other child to be regenerated, is to be so changed in his disposition or moral nature by the divine Spirit, as to become, in a measure, *like the child Jesus.* The same divine power which gave the son of Mary a holy nature or disposition at his first birth, can make any other child of a holy nature or disposition by a new birth. This every child of Adam needs; and without it no one can be saved. And when any one is renewed in infancy, the change will early show itself in the love of truth, fear of sin, desire of religious instruction, aspiring after God, and other holy exercises.

That such a propensity to sin as I have described, exists in all men from the beginning of their life, and that this constitutes the essence of depravity, has been maintained almost universally by men who have embraced the other doctrines of the orthodox faith. It was held by the ancient Fathers, except the Pelagians. It was and is contained in all the creeds of the Reformed churches in Europe and America. It was held by Arminius, and is now maintained by the Wesleyan Methodists. Even those in our country who object to some of the expressions and modes of reasoning used by the older Calvinists, still believe it to be a fact, that a disposition or propensity to sin exists in man from the beginning. Dr. Hopkins, whose views on most subjects are sober and scriptural, speaks of man's being sinful *as soon as he exists.* He holds that our moral corruption takes place "as soon as we become the children of Adam," i. e. "at the beginning of our existence." He speaks, too, of our being *inclined to sin from the first.* Dr. Dwight maintains that all men "are born sinners;"—"that infants are contaminated in their moral nature, and born in the likeness of apostate Adam;" and speaks of this as what precedes moral action: and with him agree Smalley, Hart, Backus, and other ministers generally, who were his contemporaries. And Dr. Nathaniel W. Taylor has published it as his belief "that all mankind, in consequence of

Digitized by Google

Adam's fall, are *born destitute of holiness*, and are *by nature totally depraved.*" Other expressions of his on this subject may explain what he means by being *born destitute of holiness*, and being *by nature totally depraved.* Speaking of mankind in their present fallen state, he says: "Such is the *nature* of the human mind, that it becomes the occasion of sin in men in all the appropriate circumstances of their existence." According to him, then, it is *something in the mind itself*, in the very *nature* of the mind, which proves the occasion of sin. He calls this "*a tendency* to sin," and a tendency in the very *nature* of the mind.

Various passages are found in Stuart's Commentary on the Romans, which assert the same doctrine. He says:—"Men are born destitute of all disposition to holiness." He speaks often of the "fallen nature and degenerate condition of Adam's posterity." Of infants he says;—"that their natural, unregenerate state, is a state of alienation from God, and one which needs the regenerating influence of the divine Spirit; that if they are saved," (which he hopes will be the case) they must have "a taste" or "relish for the holy joys of heaven implanted in their souls." And he asks:—"Is there nothing then which Christ by his Spirit can do for infants, in *implanting such a taste?*" He speaks of those who die before they contract actual guilt in their own persons, and says; "they still need a *new heart* and a *right spirit*,"—(just what all sinners need,) not *prospectively*, but *now.* And after making, perhaps inadvertently, some free remarks, which have commonly been understood to be inconsistent with the common doctrine, he takes special care to inform us, that he believes all Adam's posterity to be born into the degenerate state above described, and that he has meant to advance nothing at variance with this doctrine.

You see how general is the belief, that mankind are naturally inclined to sin, that they are born with a tendency to sin, a tendency existing in their very nature, previously to moral action; and that this disposition or tendency constitutes their native state. The question now is, whether it may not be, partly, at least, on

Digitized by Google

account of this *degenerate nature* of Adam's posterity, that God speaks of them, and in his government treats them, *as sinners*, from the very beginning of their personal existence, and previously to any *actual* transgression. This view of the subject Dr. Dwight particularly maintains in his system of Theology. He rejects the idea that God inflicts such sufferings as infants endure, "on moral beings who are perfectly innocent," and argues from the sufferings and death of infants, "that they are contaminated in their moral nature, and born in the likeness of apostate Adam;" — "a fact," he says, "irresistibly proved, so far as the most unexceptionable analogy can prove any thing, by the depraved moral conduct of every infant who lives so long as to be capable of moral action."

This opinion, which has generally been maintained by evangelical writers, I bring forward here as an opinion which is not to be hastily dismissed on account of any speculative difficulties. The opinion *may be true*. In our very *nature*, in the state of our minds from the beginning of our existence, God may see a moral contamination, a corrupt propensity, which, connected as it is with the first offence of Adam, renders it, in his infallible judgment, just and right for him to treat us as *sinners*. In the native character of Adam's posterity, there may be that which is of the nature of moral evil, — essentially the same moral evil in God's view, with that which is afterwards made visible to us by its developments. And may it not be that infants suffer and die on this account, as well as on account of the one offence of Adam, according to Rom. 5: 12–19?

But there are some who object to calling any thing *sinful*, or *morally corrupt*, except *actual transgression*. They admit that man has a disposition or propensity to sin before moral action commences; but they deny that such propensity is to be denominated sinful, or to be regarded as of a moral nature.

This point was particularly considered in the controversy between Dr. John Taylor and Edwards. In his treatise on Original Sin, Edwards makes a particular statement of the points in which he and Taylor were agreed. He first lays down the general

Digitized by Google

proposition, *that mankind are all naturally in such a state, that they universally run into that which is in effect their own utter, eternal perdition.* Then he presents it in two parts: 1. That all men come into the world in such a state, that they certainly and universally commit sin; and 2. That all sin exposes to utter destruction, and would end in it, were it not for the interposition of divine grace. In these points, Taylor and Edwards were agreed, as Edwards clearly shows. What then was the grand point at issue? It was the doctrine of *innate depravity.* The greater part of Taylor's book on the Scripture doctrine of original sin, is against the doctrine of *innate depravity.* And Taylor speaks of the conveyance of *a corrupt and sinful nature* to Adam's posterity, as the grand point to be proved by the maintainers of the doctrine of original sin. That all men have from the first *a corrupt and sinful nature,* is what Edwards undertakes to prove in opposition to the system of Dr. John Taylor. I mention this as a historical fact. And if any one wishes to get a just and adequate view of the controversy which has at different times shown itself on this subject, he will find it specially important to make himself familiar with the writings of Edwards and Dr. John Taylor on the same subject; and he can hardly stop without tracing the controversy back to the days of Augustine and Pelagius. Of all the books which have ever been written against the doctrine of native depravity and in support of the Pelagian scheme, that of Dr. John Taylor exhibits the greatest adroitness, and the most taking plausibility. Other things which have been brought out since, are either a repetition of what he wrote, or they hold forth the substance of his reasoning in different forms. And in my view, no recent opposer of the doctrine of original sin and native depravity, has added any thing to the number or strength of the arguments contained in the writings of Dr. John Taylor.

The subject now introduced, is one which I cannot discuss at large, without going far beyond my limits. I must content myself, therefore, with suggesting a few things on the question at issue, for the sake of aiding your contemplations.

In my judgment, the positions of Edwards in opposition to Dr.

Digitized by Google

John Taylor, interpreted by common sense, and especially by the current representations of Scripture and by Christian experience, contain truths which are essential to the religion of the Gospel. What doctrine of natural religion, or of revelation, rests upon more solid and more various evidence, than the doctrine, that all men are sinners and that from the beginning of their existence, even before they are the subjects of any degree of actual transgression, they have a depraved nature, an innate disposition to sin? Without a full belief of this doctrine, the instructions of Scripture respecting the mission of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, would be strange and inconsistent, and the confessions and prayers of the saints, ancient and modern, would appear extravagant and unintelligible. But this doctrine, which, as it is set forth in the word of God, is preeminently plain and practical, may be, and often has been made a subject of abstract, metaphysical discussion. And when this is done, it is no difficult task for the subtlely of human reason to urge very plausible arguments against the common doctrine of man's innate moral depravity. But so far as the doctrine is taught us by the inspired writers, it is our duty to hold it fast, however unable we may be to sustain it by metaphysical reasoning, or to remove the objections which unsanctified philosophy may set in array against it. It is a doctrine which is not to be brought for trial to the bar of human reason. Mere natural reason, mere philosophical or metaphysical sagacity transcends its just bounds and commits a heinous sacrilege, when it attacks this primary article of our faith, and labors to distort it, to undermine it, or to expose its truth or its importance to distrust.

There are however some objections to the doctrine that man is from the first, the subject of a corrupt nature, an evil disposition, or sinful bias, which cannot be passed over without notice. And although the objections are of such a nature that I may not be able, directly and fully, to obviate them, I think my remarks will be sufficient to show that they do by no means disprove the truth of the doctrine, and that those who are enlightened and guided by revelation must give to the doctrine their serious and unques-

Digitized by Google

tioning faith, notwithstanding any objections or difficulties which have been or may be engendered by the wisdom of the world.

These then are the objections which I shall particularly notice.

1. The common doctrine is said to be inconsistent with the obvious import of the divine law, which requires nothing but *right exercise* or *action*, and forbids nothing but the contrary. An Apostle describes *sin* to be *a transgression of the law*. This, and this only can be called moral evil, or sin.

2. The doctrine that we are the subjects of a native propensity which is morally corrupt, and which deserves to be called sinful, is said by the objector to be contrary to the suggestions of our own *consciousness*. How can we regard any thing as really *sinful* but that of which we are *conscious;* and how can we be conscious of any thing but the exercises of our own mind?

3. It is said also, that nothing is morally wrong or sinful but that which is *voluntary;* and that, as the propensity or bias referred to, precedes all voluntary action, it cannot be considered as sinful.

From the following remarks, it will, I think, be seen, that the force of these objections is liable to serious abatements, and cannot be deemed sufficient to overthrow a doctrine clearly taught by Scripture, and confirmed by the history of man.

1. When the Apostle John describes sin to be, as it is rendered in the common version, "a transgression of the law," he uses the word *ἀνομια*, which has not so exclusively an *active* sense, as is sometimes thought. It may mean not only *actual, positive transgression* of law, but, as our Catechism well expresses it, "a want of conformity to law." If we are destitute of any thing which we should have in a state of perfect conformity with the law, we are chargeable with *ἀνομία*. Now what is the meaning of the expression, almost universally adopted by Christian divines, that man is *born destitute of holiness?* Holiness is conformity to the law. And if man is naturally destitute of holiness, he is destitute of conformity to the law. But this cannot with any propriety be said of one who is not in any sense under law. And if one is under law, and is destitute of conformity to law, he is *ἄνομος*, a sinner. Now is not a *disposition* to holiness something which be-

Digitized by Google

longs to man in a state of moral rectitude? Did it not belong to Adam at the beginning of his existence? Did it not belong to Jesus from the first? No intelligent moral being can be destitute of such a disposition without being morally depraved,—without being virtually a sinner. It is the united opinion of the great body of Christian commentators and divines, from the Reformation to the present time, that men come into the world in a state of moral pollution. Barnes, in his commentary on Romans, speaks familiarly of our "being born with a corrupt disposition," and of our "*nature*" as being "corrupt." Unquestionably he means to speak of a *moral*, and not of a *physical* corruption. Such a *moral corruption* seems to be naturally implied in the language of all those who represent men at the beginning of their existence as *destitute of holiness*, *as born destitute of all disposition to holiness*, and as the subjects of a *fallen nature*. This destitution of holiness in moral beings, in other words, this *want of conformity to the law*, may, it is thought, be fairly included in the word *ἀνομία*, which the Apostle uses to describe sin.

2. It may be a serious question, whether *consciousness* does not, in some sense, extend further than to intellectual and moral exercise. Who doubts that we are conscious of *existence?* And yet is not our existence something different from exercise or action? Does it not *precede* action? How then do we become conscious of existence? We become conscious of it, only *as it is developed in action*. Who doubts that we are conscious of the faculty of thinking, remembering, loving, willing? And yet it is manifest that we are not conscious of these faculties, except as they are brought to view by their exercise. It is very common to speak of our having a consciousness of a *power* or *ability* to do this or that; though we are conscious of having the power only by its exercise. We are accustomed to speak of *consciousness* in such a case, though it is not *immediate* or *direct* consciousness. And why should consciousness be thought any the less real, because it is indirect and because we come to have it by means of exercise?

It is customary to use the word *consciousness* in relation to the

Digitized by Google

present subject. We say a man is conscious of a revengeful disposition, or of a benevolent, compassionate disposition, or of a propensity to covetousness, though he cannot be conscious of one or the other, except as it is developed in the feelings and acts of his mind. Now if a man is in this way conscious of a disposition to benevolence, does not a sentiment of self-approval arise within him? And if he is conscious of a propensity to covetousness or revenge, does not a sentiment of self-disapproval arise? Men generally regard a settled *disposition* in regard to moral objects, as the substance of all that they mean by character, whether good or bad.

If then we are conscious, in the manner just stated, of what we call a disposition or propensity, and if we do really ascribe this to ourselves, as virtually containing whatever goes to constitute character; may it not be true, that in some analogous sense, the original disposition or native propensity of man to sin, is to be regarded as the basis or chief element of his character? May we not, in our reflections, trace back the sinful feelings and actions of our childhood and youth to this native disposition, and thus become, in the manner above described, *conscious* of such a disposition? And may not this disposition, developed and made visible to consciousness by subsequent sinful action, be as properly considered to be morally wrong, as a disposition to covetousness or revenge which any adult person now has, and which he will hereafter develop in action? In other words, may not the original native disposition to sin be essentially of the same nature, though not existing in the same degree of strength, with the disposition to sin which a man has at any time in after life when he is not *actually sinning?*

The view which has now been presented is the one which has been generally entertained by Orthodox divines. And does it not agree with plain common sense? Ask any one, who has learnt the use of language, and who judges of things naturally, whether a disposition to do wrong is not a *wrong disposition?* Inquire what he means when he says, a man has a *bad disposition*; and you will find his meaning to be, that the man has

Digitized by Google

a disposition to do *bad actions*. The disposition is characterized by the actions to which it leads. You may say, the character then belongs to the disposition only in a *relative* sense. Be it so. A *relative* sense may be a very *proper* and *important* sense. If you object to expressions, because they contain words which have only a relative sense, you would object to a great part of the expressions in common use.

The application of epithets denoting a moral quality, to the disposition or propensity which *originally* belongs to man, is analogous to our usual practice in other cases similar to this. A disposition to benevolent acts, though not now in exercise, is called a *benevolent* disposition; a disposition to revenge, a *revengeful* disposition; a disposition to honesty, an *honest* disposition; and a disposition to feelings of envy, an *envious* disposition. In these and various other instances, epithets denoting moral qualities are familiarly applied to the dispositions of men, although it is understood that those dispositions are not at the time developed in any kind of action. And if every other disposition may properly be characterized from the feelings and actions to which it leads; why may not a disposition to *sin?* And if a disposition to sin in one period of our life may be called a *sinful* disposition, why not in another period? If in after life, why not in the beginning of life?

See how the case would stand, if we should take the opposite ground: And this, you are sensible, is one of the approved methods of coming at a right conclusion. Say, then, a man has a disposition to *do wrong*, but his *disposition* is *not wrong;* a disposition to *envy*, but his disposition is *not envious;* a disposition to *revenge*, but his disposition is not *revengeful;* a disposition to commit *theft*, but his disposition is *not at all thievish;* a disposition to acts of *piety*, but his disposition is *not pious;*—and finally, a disposition to commit sin, but his disposition is *not at all sinful.* The same in regard to the word *propensity*, *inclination*, *heart*, or *nature*. Thus a man has a strong propensity to *avarice*, but not an *avaricious propensity;* an inclination to do *wrong*, but not a *wrong inclination;* a heart to *disobey* God, but not a *disobedient*

Digitized by Google

heart; a nature to *sin*, but not a *sinful nature*. Who does not see all this to be a series of self-contradictions?

On this subject the Scriptures fully justify the common modes of speech. They represent the tree that bears *good fruit* to be a *good tree;* and the tree that bears *corrupt fruit* to be a *corrupt tree*. They speak of a heart which devises *liberal things*, or leads to acts of *liberality*, as a "*liberal heart;*" of a heart from which feelings and acts of purity proceed, as a "*pure* heart;" of a heart which leads to *evil deeds*, as an "*evil* heart;" of a heart which receives the truth and puts forth *honest and good desires and purposes*, as "*an honest and good heart;*" and of the heart of man generally, which prompts to *deceitful and wicked exercises and practices*, as a "*deceitful and wicked heart*." They represent that *treasure* of the heart from which good things are brought forth, to be a "*good* treasure;" and that treasure from which evil things are brought forth, to be an "*evil* treasure." That *heart* means something which precedes moral exercises, is evident from Matt. 15: 19; in which moral exercises, even "*thoughts*," are said to *come forth out of* the heart. "For out of the heart proceed evil *thoughts*, murders, adulteries, etc." Now the heart from which "evil thoughts" and these various forms of wickedness come forth, is the heart which in Scripture is called *wicked*, *deceitful*, *unclean*. On the same ground, that is called a "*carnal mind*," from which carnal thoughts and desires proceed.

In all the cases above mentioned, and in others of like kind, common use sanctions the propriety of characterizing the *disposition*, *inclination*, *propensity*, *heart*, from those feelings and actions which naturally proceed from it. If those feelings and actions are right, the disposition which leads to them is right; if wrong, the disposition is wrong.

I might show that the same mode of applying epithets is found in the Bible and in common discourse, respecting other subjects. Thus the *law*, which requires *holy actions*, is a *holy law;* and a law which leads to *unjust* and *cruel* actions, is an *unjust* and *cruel* law. Now the divine *law* is not *action*, and yet it is a *moral*

Digitized by Google

law, and is *holy* and *good*, and deserves our approbation. An *unjust* law is not *action;* still we say, it is *unjust*, and deserves our *disapprobation*. Such is the common mode of speaking, and such it will be. If you say the words *holy*, *unjust*, etc., in such cases, are used in a relative sense; I have only to reply, that the sense is indeed *relative*, but none the less *real* or *important*.

But is there not a difference between what we call disposition in a person of adult years, whose state of mind is the result of repeated moral acts, and what we call disposition, before moral action has commenced? Undoubtedly there is a difference as to the degree of strength, and as to the degree in which moral qualities may properly be predicated of it, or rather of the person who possesses it. There may be a difference as to other circumstances also. But in some respects there is a manifest similarity. In both cases, the disposition equally *precedes* action. In both cases, it equally *produces* action and *develops itself in* action. In both cases, therefore, it has the same relation to action. Accordingly it has, in both cases, the same bearing upon the position, that nothing but action can be denominated morally good or bad. There is, then, a similarity as to the main points. Now if it is proper to attribute moral qualities to *disposition* as it exists in an adult agent, who is not at the time developing his disposition in action; why is it not proper to attribute moral qualities to disposition, as it exists in the mind before moral action has commenced? In both cases it is equally distinct from moral action, and equally develops itself in moral action. In both cases it has, of course, the same kind of relation to the exercises which arise from it.

Such considerations as these have occurred to me in favor of the common opinion. And there is one more consideration, which is of superior importance to any other; namely, that the opposite opinion has a manifest tendency to prevent a just impression of the evil of sin. If men believe that a *disposition to transgress* is not morally wrong, they will be very likely to infer, that *transgression itself* is not morally wrong. For who can think that an

Digitized by Google

act is wrong, when *the disposition* from which it proceeds is not wrong? that an act is criminal, when a *propensity* to that act is perfectly innocent? How utterly abhorrent would it be to conscience, common sense, and piety, to tell men, that their propensity to lie, and steal, and murder has nothing in it which is in the least degree faulty! that their disposition to forget God and disobey his law, is not at all sinful, and cannot be looked upon with any disapprobation! What would be the natural influence of this view of the subject upon the minds of men? Would it be likely to produce in them a deep conviction of sin, such as David expressed in the 51st Psalm, and Paul in the 5th and 7th chapters of his epistle to the Romans? Would it make them feel the inexpressible evil of a "carnal mind," and a "heart of stone," and the necessity of its being taken away by the regenerating power of God? Would it lead them fervently to pray, that God would create in them a new heart and a right spirit? Who will labor most to resist and overcome his propensity to wicked courses, — he that regards it as innocent, or he that regards it as criminal and hateful? Will it not be very natural for any one to say; if my disposition to transgress the divine law has nothing sinful in it, why should I be solicitous to be rid of it? Can I be bound in duty to take pains to subdue that, which has nothing wrong in it? Can I be blamed for having a propensity which is not blame-worthy? There would be very good reason why I should earnestly pray God to subdue a disposition, which I felt to be morally wrong and culpable. But why should I be earnest in prayer to God, that he would subdue a disposition which is not wrong? On the whole, what kind of advantage can there be in the sentiment, that a disposition to do wrong is not of a moral nature? Will sinners be more likely to repent, and to get rid of the propensity of their hearts to sin, because you call that propensity by a soft name? The existence of such a propensity in the heart is a hateful and dangerous thing. Will you make it any the less so by calling it innocent?

I have endeavored to point out what would be the natural result of the opinion, that a propensity to sin is not sinful. If

Digitized by Google

any who advance this opinion, have a meaning in their own minds which would not lead to such a result, that meaning is too recondite for common apprehension. It is certain that all the usual modes of speech in relation to this subject imply, that a *propensity* partakes of the same moral quality with the acts which proceed from it; that a *disposition* is wrong, if it prompts to wrong conduct, and *because* it does so; in other words, that *the nature of the disposition is determined from the nature of the exercises and actions to which it leads.* This is all implied in the common forms of speech, and in the common forms of thought. And it is a well-known fact, that the more men's understanding becomes enlightened by divine truth, and the more their conscience is awakened to do its office, the more thoroughly are they convinced of the sinfulness of their *disposition* to depart from God, and the more desirous are they of an influence from above to remove it. When men are taught of God, their minds in general are first occupied with their overt acts of wickedness. But they come in the end to a deep and humbling conviction of the moral turpitude of that constant *disposition*, which they find within them, to forsake the way of holiness and pursue forbidden objects. Once, in a state of moral insensibility, they saw little or no evil in their disposition to forget God and transgress his law; perhaps they justified it. Now they look upon it as the essence of moral evil. It is on account of this urgent propensity to do wrong, this *sin which dwelleth in them*, that they most heartily abhor themselves. And they pray to God most importunately, that they may be delivered from this "law of sin," this "carnal mind," this "body of death," this sum of all that is vile and hateful. Now if any one comes forward and advances the opinion, that a disposition or propensity to sin is not in its own nature sinful, does he not set himself, however unintentionally, in opposition to the most spiritual convictions of Christians? And does he not teach that which the worst men wish to be true, and which, if they can believe it to be true, will do much towards keeping their consciences quiet in an unregenerate state? In a word, whatever else such a man may teach

Digitized by Google

and do to benefit the souls of men, will not this opinion have a fearful influence to hinder the conviction and conversion of sinners?

Let us take one more view of the subject.

It has been the common belief of orthodox Christians, that one of the most important things which the regenerating influence of the Spirit accomplishes, is, to take away man's *natural propensity* to sin, and to give him a *disposition* to love and obey God. Now if a uniform and predominant propensity to sin is not sinful, then why should we suppose that regeneration takes it away? Regeneration, it would seem, must act upon man as a *moral* being, and remove that which is *morally wrong*. The rest may be left as it was. But according to the opinion upon which I have animadverted, a sinner may be regenerated, and still have the same propensity to sin as before; and his sanctification, relating as it does to what is moral, may go on, and he may become perfect in holiness, and still uniformly retain his *sinless disposition to commit sin*. Why not? Surely holiness cannot be supposed incompatible with any of our *innocent* propensities.

But who can doubt that the natural propensity which men have to sin must be subdued, and finally taken away, by the sanctifying influence of the Spirit? And the reason why certain writers do not represent the removal of man's propensity to sin as an essential part of regeneration, is, I suppose, that they first adopt the principle, that nothing is morally good or evil, but action, (mental action,) and then as regeneration is a *moral* change, conclude that it can relate only to action, and can have nothing to do with any thing in the mind which precedes action, and which is not action, lest somehow it should come to be a *physical* change. But who does not see that regeneration would be of little worth, should it leave the regenerated person still under the influence of his natural and predominant inclination to sin? and those who say that this propensity to sin is not morally wrong, must still so shape the matter, that regeneration, though relating, as they think, only to action, shall, in some way or other, remove the natural *propensity*. And of course they must hold, that regeneration is, in part at

Digitized by Google

least, a *physical* change, inasmuch as it removes a propensity which *they* say is of a physical, not of a moral nature. But it is very certain that the renewing influence of the Spirit, whether called moral or physical, *must* take away a man's governing propensity to sin, or he would need to be changed again by some other influence, in order that he might be prepared to obey God, — unless indeed a man can truly obey God, while he has a uniform and governing propensity to disobey. I repeat it, man's natural propensity to sin *must be removed;* — yes, however that propensity may be covered over by gentle epithets, it is a great and destructive evil, and must be removed by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, or it will bring ruin upon the soul. And if any one should still represent, that the great and only thing that is necessary is, that the *actions* should be made right, and that it is solely for this end that we need the renewing of the Holy Ghost; such a representation would require that the words of our Saviour, — "Make the *tree* good and the *fruit* will be good also," should be so altered as to read thus: — make the *fruit* good, "and the fruit *will* be good." — The fruit would no longer show what the tree is. For though the fruit might be good, the tree might still be bad. And the badness of the tree, would on this ground be no evil, and might very safely remain, there being no kind of necessity either first or last, to make the *tree* good in order to have good fruit.

In the extended remarks which I have made on this subject, I have wished to follow the dictates of justice and candor. The theory which I have attempted to defend is generally regarded as different from that which only represents man as responsible for his actions. In some respects it is different. But we know that, in many cases, two theories which are in some respects different, and which are often supposed to be opposite to each other, will on thorough examination be found to be not only consistent with each other, but to be merely different views of one and the same thing. I may survey an object from one position, and see it on one side, while you survey it from another position, and see it on another side. Confining ourselves respectively to these first

Digitized by Google

views, we may charge each other with mistake; and you may contend for your own particular view, and I for mine, as *exclusively* true. And exclusively true it might really be, if the object before us had no other side but that which you survey, or that which I survey. But if you and I should change positions and turn our eye towards the same object on different sides, we should come to a different conclusion. We might not indeed give up our former views as false. But we should add other views, and should modify our former views, so far as our additional views required. We should at least, correct one great mistake, that is, our supposing that the object had only one side, and that the particular view we respectively took of it, was the only one which could be taken. The final result would be, that by a farther examination, — by going beyond our former partial views, and enlarging our knowledge, we should be satisfied, that each of the different views which we first took of the subject, had a portion of truth; that those views which once seemed to clash with each other, are perfectly consistent; that our opposition to each other arose from our limited knowledge; and that our examination of other parts of the subject has not only increased our knowledge, but has given greater clearness and correctness to the particular views which we first had. Locke, speaking of "three miscarriages" that men are chargeable with in reference to the use of their reason, says: "The third sort is of those who sincerely follow reason, but for want of that which one may call *large, sound, round-about sense*, have not a full view of all that relates to the question. We are all short-sighted, and very often see but one side of a matter; our views are not extended to all that has connection with it. We see but in part; — and therefore it is no wonder we conclude not right from our partial views. This might instruct the proudest esteemer of his own parts, how useful it is to talk and consult with others. For since no one sees all, and we generally have different prospects of the same thing according to our different positions, — it is not beneath any man to try whether another may not have notions of things which have escaped him and which his reason would make use of if they came into his mind."

Digitized by Google

In regard to the subject under consideration, that view, which seems most nearly to accord with Scripture, and with our own consciousness, and which will be most likely in the end to be generally adopted, is, I think, one which substantially unites the two theories that have been considered. Let us look at it.

The *moral nature* or *disposition* of man, though it may be contemplated as *distinct* from action, mental as well as bodily, and though it is evidently pre-supposed in action, does not exist in such a manner, that it can be really regarded and treated as *in fact exclusive of action*. What I mean is, that *there is no such thing as a moral being who is actually treated as a subject of retribution, while his moral nature is not in some way developed in holy or unholy action*. The very idea of a moral agent *receiving* retribution, implies the exercise of his moral faculties, the acting out of his disposition. That any one can, as a rational being, enjoy good, or suffer evil, without mental action is inconceivable. I say, then, that there can be no such thing as reward or punishment actually dispensed to a moral being, whose moral nature is not developed in some kind of exercise. The disposition, the intelligent nature does indeed exist; it is a reality; and God is perfectly acquainted with it, before it is made known by action. But it cannot be known to created beings, not even to him who is the subject of it, except *as manifested by internal* or *external action*. It cannot in any other way become a matter of direct consciousness. And as it cannot be known, it cannot be visibly recompensed, aside from its outgoings in action.

But here a question arises, which it is more easy to propose, than to answer; to wit; what will become of human beings, who die before their moral nature is in any way developed in action?

The most proper reply to this inquiry is, to say frankly, that it is a subject which lies beyond the reach of our intelligence. Neither our own reason nor the word of God furnishes us with any adequate information. All that we learn from Scripture respecting a future retribution relates to those who acted right or wrong in a state of probation, and who are to be rewarded "according to the deeds done in the body." Respecting any other

Digitized by Google

retribution than this, we are left in ignorance. It cannot be doubted, that those who die before they have done good or evil, and before they have had any mental action, either holy or sinful, will exist in a future world. But they cannot in any conceivable sense be regarded as moral agents who have passed through a state of trial. They cannot "receive according to what they have done," as, by the very supposition, they have done nothing. None of our ordinary conceptions respecting a just retribution can apply to them. There is a veil over the particulars of their future state, except that the word of God contains some most pleasing intimations that divine grace will sanctify them, and that they will belong to the Redeemer's kingdom. I am not aware that any intelligent Christian can be found, who maintains the unauthorized and appalling position, that infant children who are not guilty of any actual sin either outwardly or inwardly, will be doomed to misery in the world to come. It is much more in accordance with what we are taught of the expansive benevolence of God and the reign of grace, to cherish the idea that through the operation of the divine Spirit they will be born again, and so be delivered from their evil bias, and be brought to possess a state of mind which will prepare them to love and obey God as soon as they are capable of moral exercises. And as by the supposition they are not capable of this in the present world, it follows of course that the first development of their moral nature must take place after death. If they were to be left in their unrenewed state, with their natural propensity to sin, their character would then be exhibited in sinful feelings and actions. But if regeneration, which we know to be indispensable to salvation, takes place in those who die in infancy, as we trust it will, then, as soon as they have opportunity in the coming world, they will act out their renewed nature in spontaneously loving what is holy, and their condition will be fixed according to the first development of their moral state in moral action.

You will perceive that what I have now stated is not what the Scriptures teach as to a future retribution. Their instructions,

Digitized by Google

on this subject, relate to those who have done good or evil in this life, and cannot be applied to those who have done neither. What the word of God reveals as the rule of the final judgment, will most certainly be the universal rule in relation to those to whom it can apply. In what manner others will be treated, is one of the secret things which belong to God. All that we know is, that God reigns, that his ways are just and right, that his mercy in redemption will abound above our highest conceptions, and that his proceedings in the world to come towards infant children, as well as towards all others, will most clearly manifest his perfections, and especially his infinite love.

I am not confident that the remarks which I have made are exactly conformed to truth. I would only recommend them to a careful consideration. I have said, that the native disposition is not to be regarded as actually standing alone. While any one exists and continues to exist with a disposition or propensity, which has not in any way been manifested by action, how can he be treated as a subject of retribution? Though his disposition is wrong,—(wrong *as a disposition*) he must ultimately be treated according to his *actions*, they being the *true expression of his disposition*. His being treated according to his *actions* seems thus to amount to the same thing as being treated *according to his disposition*. The former is made the express rule of the divine conduct towards man for the obvious reason, that actions are directly visible to conscience, and can be compared with law by the subjects of law, and so are the proper grounds of recompense. In the divine government, then, *disposition* is in fact treated as morally wrong, only as developed in action, and as thus made visible to those who are the subjects of that government. A government which is addressed to conscience, must be administered in this manner. And if any one speaks of our natural pravity as deserving the divine displeasure, he must intend to speak of it *as developed in moral action*.

The two views which have been taken of the subject need not, then, be regarded as opposite and clashing views. They are only different views of the same subject, contemplated under different

Digitized by Google

aspects. Man, at the commencement of his existence, is, according to one view, characterized from his *disposition*, and is regarded as sinful as soon as he is born, on account of his *invariable propensity to sin*. But then, according to the other view, this propensity to sin is really connected with sinful emotion, and is certainly followed by it. Man, considered in one point of view, is judged according to his *actions;* in another point of view, according to his *disposition as developed in actions*. If the *disposition* is pronounced to be sinful, it is pronounced to be so *relatively* to the action to which it leads. And if the *action* is pronounced sinful, it is relatively to the mind, and the disposition of the mind, from which it proceeds. Each is invariably related to the other, and in our sober contemplations, and in the nature of the case, each is involved in the other. If any one regards moral qualities as belonging to either as though it were entirely separate from the other, he is mistaken. He does not conform to the nature of things. And if any one confines his attention to either, exclusively of the other, does he not betray the want of enlargement in his habits of thinking? And let me add, if any one forgets that all moral attributes and qualities do, in strict propriety, belong to the intelligent *person*, the *agent himself*, and are to be ascribed to him, and to him only, he forgets an obvious and essential truth; and forgets it, I apprehend, for no other reason, than because it is so obvious. Most clearly it is *the mind*, or rather *the man himself*, that is *depraved and sinful*. This sinful being acts; and being sinful himself, he acts sinfully. This is the sum of the whole matter.

And now if you find that I have in any instance advanced positions which, taken by themselves, appear to be erroneous or defective; let the general current of thought, as far as may be, help to correct the error, or supply the defect. Some parts of the subject which I have presumed to discuss, are evidently involved in great obscurity, and it is almost impossible to say anything respecting them, without the danger of falling into some mistake ourselves, or of being misapprehended by others. I am as liable as other men, to take different and seemingly opposite views of a

Digitized by Google

subject, in consequence of contemplating it from different positions, or in different relations. In such cases you will, I hope, endeavor to find out a candid and fair construction of what is said, such as you would think due to yourselves in like circumstances. But be sure to guard, with the utmost watchfulness, against error, and against whatever might tend to error. It would be inexcusable presumption in me to think myself free from mistakes. The subject which has been brought forward is encompassed with difficulties which I pretend not to be able to solve. Objections will doubtless arise in your mind, against what I have written. I could urge objections myself; and would gladly take my place at the feet of any man, who could satisfactorily answer them. We ought always to approach this subjeet with a humble mind, remembering that the natural and total depravity of which we speak, belongs to us, and striving with all diligence to be rid of that prejudice against the truth, which is one of the most common inmates of the depraved heart. What becomes us in these circumstances is, not dispute and strife, but serious, earnest inquiry after the truth, pursued with patient, persevering labor, with kindness towards those who differ from us, with a cordial readiness to be convinced, and with prayer to God for the guidance of his Spirit. If we inquire after the truth in this manner, we shall obtain good to ourselves, and shall contribute to the good of others, though our inquiries may for the present fail of complete success. We have the comfort to believe, that the knowledge which Christians have of divine truth is progressive. It will undoubtedly be growing in clearness and comprehensiveness to the end of time, and forever. When Christians come to associate profound humility, unquenchable zeal for improvement, and the spirit of prayer, with the exercise of their mental powers, they will gradually outgrow their errors and their intellectual and moral littleness, and will speed their way towards a state of perfection. And if, even after attaining to the perfection of that higher state to which they now aspire, they find, as they doubtless will, that some subjects or parts of subjects lie beyond the reach of their intelligence; their very perfection will teach them to acquiesce in their ignorance.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXIX.

REMARKS ON THE WORDS INNATE, TRANSMITTED, HEREDITARY, CONSTITUTIONAL, IMPUTED.

It would accord best with my views of what is proper and useful, to confine my remarks and reasonings to the doctrine of human depravity, just as it stands in the Bible, and to its practical uses, avoiding altogether the discussion of the abstruse, metaphysical questions which are everywhere agitated at the present day. I cannot but approve the sentiment of Howe in the following passage, taken from his Living Temple. "As for them that could never have the gospel, or *infants* incapable of receiving it, we must consider the Holy Scriptures were written for those that could use them, not for those that could not; therefore to have inserted in them an account of God's methods of dispensation towards such, had only served to gratify the curious and unconcerned, not to instruct and benefit such as were concerned. And it well became hereupon the accurate wisdom of God, not herein to indulge the vanity and folly of men." But as men cannot be kept from agitating questions of an abstruse nature on this subject, and as many of the opinions which have been entertained, are, in my apprehension, not only erroneous, but of hurtful tendency; I have thought it expedient for a time, to look at these speculative matters, and to endeavor to show, that there is nothing in the results of thorough philosophical investigation, which is in the least degree unfavorable to the commonly received doctrine of original sin.

Digitized by Google

Here I shall make a few remarks on the meaning of several words in common use, and on the propriety of applying them to the present subjects.

The word *innate*, together with the words which Johnson uses to explain it, are applied as freely to the qualities of the mind, as to anything which pertains to the body. Thus writers speak of *innate integrity*, *innate eloquence*, *inborn passions*, *inborn worth*, *inbred affection*. *Innate* is opposed to the word *superadded*, which in this case would denote something which does not arise from what belongs to man's nature, or from what he is by birth. If depravity belongs to man in the state in which he is born; if a foundation is laid for his sinning in his very nature; it is perfectly suitable to call his depravity *innate*. To say that man is born destitute of holiness, and with a propensity to sin, is the same as to say, that man's destitution of holiness, or his propensity to sin, is innate: in other words, that it is *natural*.

The word *connate* is seldom used at the present day; although there would seem to be no special objection against it. For how can man's depravity, or propensity to sin, be *innate*, that is, born *in* him, without being *connate*, that is, born *with* him?

Hereditary means, descended from an ancestor; transmitted from a parent to a child. Now is it not a plain matter of fact, that a depraved nature, a propensity to sin, is transmitted from parent to child, and has descended from the common ancestor of our race to all his posterity? Are we not "degenerate plants of a strange vine?" And if depravity comes in this way, what impropriety is there in calling it *hereditary?*

I beg leave in this place to advert once more to what has already been before us, and to offer a few additional remarks on the doctrine maintained by the orthodox, namely, *that we are depraved and lost in consequence of the offence of Adam.* In what way did Adam's apostasy produce such an effect upon his posterity?

Was his transgression so charged to his posterity, that they are subjected to suffering on account of it, while they themselves have nothing sinful, at most, nothing which is the ground of their suf-

Digitized by Google

ferings? My reasoning here, again, will relate exclusively to that period of life which precedes any sinful exercises. Because so soon as we have exercises, which constitute actual sin, no one can reasonably suppose that we suffer *solely* on account of Adam's sin. In regard to the first period of our infancy, two suppositions may be made; one is, that we have a *sinful nature, a corrupt moral propensity;* the other, that we have nothing which is in any respect or in any degree of the nature of sin; that we are free from moral depravity. Those who believe in the doctrine of *imputation* in the strictest sense, still hold that we have from the beginning a vitiosity of nature. Now what reason can there be to suppose, that in the infliction of evil upon us in infancy, God has no respect whatever to our moral corruption? Can we be sure, that our depravity is of no consideration with God in respect to our sufferings at the beginning of life, and that he brings them upon us on account of Adam's sin, and on that account *exclusively?* It may indeed be true that we suffer on account of the offence of him who was the head and the representative of our race. And it may also be true, that our moral corruption has a bearing upon our sufferings. God may have respect to each of these in the evils to which he subjects us in early infancy. He may have respect to one as the original, primary reason, and to the other as the secondary, subordinate reason. Or he may have respect to both, as coördinate and equal reasons. Doubtless he has respect to *something* as a reason for so important a proceeding in his government. And if we judge from the Bible, and from observation, we shall, I think, be satisfied that either Adam's offence, or our native sinfulness, or both together, must constitute the reason. Considering what the Apostle so plainly teaches in Romans 5., how can we set aside Adam's sin, and say, that it is not at all on that account, that suffering and death come upon infants? And admitting the fact, that we have from the first a sinful nature, how can we set aside this, and say with confidence, that it is not with any reference to this, but wholly and exclusively on account of Adam's offence, that suffering comes upon infants? Can we separate what divine truth has joined together?

Digitized by Google

Consider then the other supposition above named, — *that at the beginning of life, we are free from moral depravity, — that we have nothing which can in any sense be called sinful.* Children at the beginning of life are subjected to various sufferings; and all must agree, that they are subjected to these sufferings for *some reason.* But what is that reason? On what account do they suffer, if they are entirely free from moral pollution? Is suffering brought upon them in the way of *moral discipline*, for their benefit? But how can this be, when, according to the supposition, they are not intelligent, moral agents, and of course are not capable of moral discipline? Is suffering brought upon them, then, by way of *anticipation*, on account of the sins which they *will* commit, when they become moral agents? In other words, is it a punishment for sin *prospectively?* Let any man judge whether this can be made consistent with our ideas of law or justice? — Is suffering, then, brought upon infant children, as a *preventive* of sin? But if this were the design of it, should we not suppose that in some instances it would actually *be* a preventive? — Does the Bible then give us any instruction, does it bring out any principle, which can aid our inquiries on this subject, and show us why it is that suffering comes upon infant children? Now I find that God lays it down in the decalogue, as a standing principle, that he "visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children." And the history of the divine dispensations clearly shows that, to a greater or less extent, he does in his providence act on this principle. And I find something which appears to be still more directly to the purpose in Romans, chap. 5. Here I am told, that it is *through the offence of Adam* that his posterity die; that *by one man's offence* death reigns over the human family; that this judgment was by one to condemnation. If I were now for the first time to read this part of Scripture, I should verily think that I had found an answer to the inquiry, why it is that at the beginning of life we are subjected to suffering. I am here taught by the word of God, that death, with its attendant evils, is brought upon all human beings without exception, and of course upon human beings in early infancy, "*by the offence of one,*" that is, Adam.

Digitized by Google

If an objection is made against such a proceeding, as inconsistent with the moral attributes of God; I ask, who knows that it is inconsistent? I ask, too, what other view of the case would be more consistent? It is clear that infants suffer. According to the present supposition, they are free from sin, and therefore cannot suffer on account of any moral evil in themselves. I cannot think they suffer on account of sins which they will afterwards commit; or that they suffer for the purpose of preventing sin in after life. And I here give up the opinion that they suffer either on account of being born in sin, or on account of the sin of Adam. How, then, shall I account for the fact that they suffer? Suppose I try this position; that is,—from a dislike to the doctrine of our native sinfulness, and the doctrine of imputation, and for the sake of being totally rid of both, I cut off the whole race of man during the interesting period of their early infancy, from their relation to Adam, degrade them from the dignity of human beings, and put them in the rank of brute animals, and say, *they suffer as the brutes do.* But this would be the worst of all theories,—the farthest off from Scripture and reason, and the most revolting to all the noble sensibilities of man. And then the question comes up; why I should adopt such an opinion? I find that I have no reason for it but this. I first deny man's native sinfulness, and of course, I deny that infants suffer on any such account. Next, I say, the doctrine of imputation is, in every possible form, unreasonable and absurd, and notwithstanding what the Apostle teaches as to the effect of Adam's sin, I cannot admit the idea that infants suffer, in whole or in part, on *that account.* Now if I regard infants as belonging to the family of human beings, and as treated on any principles which are applicable to such beings, I find myself in a strait,—having set aside the common, obvious reason why human beings suffer and die, that is, their own sinfulness, and the special reason which the Apostle suggests in Romans 5, that is, their relation to apostate Adam, and every other reason, and finding myself unable to give any kind of reply to the question, why infants suffer and die. Unwilling, therefore, to bear the pressure of this question,

Digitized by Google

which is so hard to be answered, I resolve to rid myself of it at once, and say, children in early infancy are not to be regarded as belonging to the human race; they are not treated as human beings, but as brute animals; and so the evils which they suffer, do not come upon them either because they have any moral depravity, or on account of the sin of Adam and their relation to him as the head of the human race, or on account of anything else which appertains to beings possessed of a moral nature.

I have here put myself in the place of one who denies native depravity, and the fatal influence of Adam's disobedience upon his posterity, and who thus forces himself to invent an hypothesis which so ill accords with Scripture and Christian feeling. The fair result of the whole seems to be this. As there are only two things mentioned in the Bible, which can be supposed to bring suffering and death upon the human race, the apostasy of Adam, and their own personal sin; if we deny the native sinfulness of man, or if we deny that infants are in any sense subjected to suffering on that account, we are shut up to the conclusion, that they suffer exclusively on account of Adam's sin, and so that the often repeated declaration of the Apostle, that *death comes upon all by the offence of one*, is to be understood in the most obvious and unqualified sense; or else that infants suffer and die without any assignable reason whatever.

But there are other ways in which Adam's sin has been supposed to have an influence upon his posterity. I inquire then whether that influence is to be understood in this way; namely, that *Adam's sin was the occasion of bringing his posterity into life in such circumstances of weakness and temptation, that although they are born without any wrong bias, or any tendency to sin, they will, after a while, be corrupted and fall into sin.* This opinion, which is defended by few at the present day except Unitarians, has been substantially considered in previous Lectures. I shall only say here, that it leaves wholly untouched the question, on what account do human beings suffer before they commit actual sin? and that it requires a most unnatural and forced construc-

Digitized by Google

tion to be put upon the whole representation of the Apostle in Rom. 5.

Again; I inquire whether Adam's sin affects his posterity in this way; namely; that *by a special divine constitution, they are, in consequence of his fall, born in a state of moral depravity leading to certain ruin; or that, according to the common law of descent, they are partakers of a corrupt nature, the offspring being like the parent; and that suffering and death come upon them as the effect of Adam's offence, they being still not innocent and pure, but depraved and sinful.*

This is the view of the subject which I consider as more conformable to the word of God and to facts, than any other. As to those who deny the doctrine of native depravity, and the doctrine of imputation, and the doctrine of John Taylor and the Unitarians, and yet profess to believe that we are depraved and ruined *in consequence of Adam's sin*, I am at a loss to know what their belief amounts to. They say, Adam's sin had an influence; but they deny all the conceivable ways in which it could have an influence, and particularly the ways which are most clearly brought to view in Rom. 5, and in other parts of Scripture. Their belief seems to be merely negative.

If I am asked whether I hold the doctrine of *imputation;* my reply will depend on the meaning you give to the word. Just make the question definite by substituting the explanation for the word, and an answer will be easy. Do you then mean what Stapfer and Edwards and many others mean, namely, that *for God to give Adam a posterity like himself, is one and the same as to impute his sin to them?* Then my answer is, that God did in this sense, impute Adam's sin to his posterity. This is the very thing implied in the doctrine of native depravity. By the doctrine of imputation, do you mean, that Adam's sin was the occasion of our ruin; that it was the distant, but real cause of our condemnation and death? I consider the doctrine, thus understood, to be according to Scripture. Do you mean that we are *guilty*, that is, (according to the true, original import of the word,) *exposed to suffering* on account of Adam's sin? In

Digitized by Google

this view too I think the doctrine Scriptural. Do you mean, that God visits the iniquity of our common father upon his children, through all generations? This too accords with the truth. But if the doctrine of imputation means, that Adam's posterity are literally and personally chargeable with his sin and that God inflicts the penalty of the law upon them for his offence alone, *they themselves being in all respects perfectly sinless*, then the doctrine, in my view, wants proof. There appears to be no place for such a doctrine, seeing all Adam's posterity are in fact morally depraved. And if they are so, I know not why any one should think that God has no reference to their depravity in the sufferings which he brings upon them. The Apostle does not use the word *impute* in relation to the subject; but he does teach, in the plainest manner, that the fall of Adam spread depravity and destruction through the whole human race. The particular word which shall be used to express this doctrine is not essential; and as the sacred writers do not express it by *imputation*, we should not be over-strenuous for that particular word. Nevertheless, as it is the name which has generally been given to the doctrine in orthodox creeds and systems of divinity, and as the word is used in an analogous sense in Romans, 4: 6; I can see no reason for rejecting it. Properly explained, it is well adapted to the subject. Were it not so, we can hardly account for it that Calvin and Edwards and all the most distinguished orthodox divines have used it. The great object is to get a right understanding of the doctrine itself, as set forth in the word of God, and to express it in a just and impressive manner.

If you ask, whether depravity is *propagated;* my answer is, that *human beings* are propagated, and are propagated *as they are, fallen, corrupt.* "Adam begat a son in his own likeness." This contains the whole doctrine, if likeness includes, as it undoubtedly does, likeness in regard to moral disposition and character. The word *propagated* is not generally applied to depravity, and is not so well suited to the subject, as *natural*, or *native*. But it is neither uncommon nor unscriptural to speak of depravity as coming in the way of natural generation, or natural descent.

Digitized by Google

Is the depravity of man *constitutional?* The chief objection against the use of this word in relation to the subject before us, seems to rest on the assumption, that the word means nearly the same as *physical;* or at least something opposite to *moral.* But this assumption is unfounded. The word, *constitutional*, may relate either to the constitution or appointment of God, or to the nature or constitution of man. Now was it not the constitution of God, that is, the *principle* or *plan* which he established, that the posterity of Adam should bear his moral image? Is there not, in fact, such a connection between him and them, that condemnation and death were brought upon them by his one offence? And did not God *constitute* this connection? Was it not his appointment, that "by one man's disobedience the many were *constituted sinners?*" And is it not the established order of things, that children, from generation to generation, shall resemble their parents as to the substance of moral character? Evidently, then, the depravity of man takes place *according to the divine constitution*, and so may be called *constitutional.* And is not this a very obvious and proper sense of the word? But the word may also relate to the nature or constitution of *men.* And if their depravity is founded in their nature or constitution, may it not properly be called *constitutional?* I do not now speak of their *bodily* constitution, but of the constitution of their *mind*, their *moral* constitution, their *nature* as *moral beings.* Now if depravity lies in our moral *constitution*, or directly and certainly flows from it; we may in this sense call it *constitutional*, — just as we call it *natural*, because it is founded in our moral *nature*, or flows from it. The word however is not so frequently used by the orthodox, as by those who differ from them. To discredit our doctrine of *native* depravity, they say that we hold to a *constitutional* depravity. Be it so. Do not *they* hold to the same? The most respectable of them maintain, that *the cause of sin lies in the nature of man, not in his circumstances.* And what is the difference between the *nature* of man, and his *constitution*, whether taken physically, or morally? And what is the difference between calling depravity *natural*, meaning that it results not from

Digitized by Google

man's circumstances but from his *nature*, and calling it *constitutional*, meaning that it results from man's moral constitution? If there are objections against this, there are against that. But there is no need of logomachy. Those who believe human depravity to be native, do not generally think it best to call it *constitutional*, because the word is liable to be misunderstood. They are better pleased with the language of Scripture, or with that which is evidently conformed to it.

On the whole, it is evident, that the words *native*, *innate*, *hereditary*, etc. may all be used to designate some quality or circumstance of man's depravity, with as much propriety as they can be used in relation to any thing else. They should, however, be well explained, and most of them should be chiefly confined to systematic theology. The language best suited to the purposes of popular instruction and devotion, is that which is most Scriptural. But there can be no reasonable objection against the moderate use of technical or scientific terms in the more elaborate theological treatises. I know indeed, that an opposer of the common doctrine may collect together all the epithets which have ever been used by orthodox writers, and, by making them up into one overloaded sentence, and by contriving to give them a gross and offensive signification, may excite prejudices against the doctrine, and thus prevent many from learning what the Scriptures teach. In like manner, opposers of the doctrine of election have often labored to make it odious, by drawing out in fearful array a great variety of words which have sometimes been applied to it, and so managing the matter as to give the words a meaning not at all suited to the nature of the subject. But Christian divines and philosophers will easily see the difference between argument, and declamation; between appeals to reason and piety, and appeals to passion and prejudice. What we want on such a subject, is candid, sober, thorough discussion, based upon sound principles of reason, and upon the infallible word of God.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXX.

EVERY OTHER THEORY AS MUCH ENCUMBERED WITH DIFFICULTIES AS THE ORTHODOX.

It will help you to form a right estimate of the speculative objections which have been urged against the common doctrine of native depravity, if you find that all the other views which have been entertained of the state of man are liable to objections of equal weight, and some of them to objections of still greater weight. I think it no difficult task to make this appear. You will find on careful inquiry, that the various schemes which have been maintained by different writers as to the apostasy of man, are as really open to the pressure of speculative objections and difficulties, as the orthodox doctrine. And if this is the case, then it must be a fruitless thing for any one to attempt to rid himself of difficulties by shifting off the orthodox doctrine, and adopting some other in its stead. And it will evidently be the dictate of true wisdom to inquire, not what doctrine is free from difficulties, but what doctrine is supported by the word of God and by the results of experience. We shall perceive this to be a matter of great practical importance, when we consider that the principal reason why so many intelligent men have rejected the doctrine of native depravity, has been the force of speculative objections, particularly those which arise from a consideration of the moral attributes of God; and that the principal effort of such men has been to find out some scheme, which would not be open to objec-

Digitized by Google

tions — an effort which we shall see has entirely failed of success.

I shall now advert to several of the prominent theories which have been maintained respecting human depravity, by those who have denied the common orthodox doctrine.

One of these is, *that there is in the character of man a mixture of moral good and evil; and that this mixture commences early, and continues through life.*

This may be thought to be a rational and liberal view of the subject; and as those who adopt it escape some of the difficulties which respect the theory of native and total depravity, they seem to think that they are free from difficulties altogether. But is it so? Are they not met by various texts of Scripture which plainly teach that the unrenewed heart is entirely destitute of holiness? And do not these texts stand as difficulties in their way? They have also to encounter the difficulty arising from the testimony of the most intelligent and pious men, whose experience and deep inward consciousness confirm the common doctrine of depravity. And finally, their scheme is exposed to as real a difficulty as the common doctrine, in relation to the infinite benevolence of God. For if it is inconsistent with his benevolence, that a race of intelligent beings, who are wholly dependent on his will, should exist from the beginning of life in a state of *total* depravity; is it not also inconsistent with his benevolence, that they should be found in a state of *partial* depravity? Is it thought that a God of infinite power and goodness must guard his offspring against total depravity? Why then must he not guard them against being depraved at all? Any degree of depravity is a great and destructive evil. And how can we suppose that God will suffer so destructive an evil to take place, when he is able to prevent it? Is there no difficulty here? And if you take upon you to say, that God is *not able* to prevent the partial depravity of men; is there no difficulty in this, — that the God of heaven and earth is unable to keep men pure from sin, when he is infinitely wise and powerful, and has the hearts of all men in his hand, and can effectually guard them against whatever

Digitized by Google

would have any tendency to corrupt them? And may you not as well say, that God is unable to prevent the *total* depravity of man, as that he is unable to prevent their *partial* depravity?

You cannot avoid difficulties by adopting the opinion that the sinfulness of man, whether partial or total, commences at a *later period*, than what the common doctrine implies. For if we have reason to conclude that the goodness of God will certainly preserve us from being sinners at the *beginning* of life; why may we not conclude that it will preserve us from being sinners *afterwards?* Besides this, you will have to encounter another difficulty; that is, you must contend with the sacred writers, who teach with great clearness, that all men, whatever their age, are sinful, and need the grace of Christ to sanctify and save them.

Do you object to the common doctrine that sinners turn it into an apology for sin, saying, if God has brought us into existence in such a state, how can we be culpable? — And may not the ground which *you* take furnish an equal occasion to sinners to exculpate themselves? May they not say, if our Almighty Maker has so formed us, and so ordered our circumstances, that we shall at some period of our life, certainly fall into sin; then how are we to blame?

Say then, if you will, with Dr. Taylor, that the consequence of Adam's fall is only this, that we are placed in circumstances which particularly *expose* us to sin, and which render obedience difficult; and that we are corrupted by the influence of bad example. The objector is still ready with his questions. Why did the Author of our being, and the disposer of all our circumstances, place us in such a state of temptation and exposure? If he wished us to be obedient, why did he take pains to render obedience so difficult? If he wished to preserve us from sin, why did he voluntarily expose us to it, especially at that early period, when we are incapable of enduring severe exposures, and when he knew how unhappy would be the result? What kind father would willingly subject his children, in the tenderness of childhood, to trials and dangers for which they are not prepared, and which he knows will be too great for them to endure? Is not God kind-

Digitized by Google

er than the kindest of earthly parents? And will he so constitute the whole race of man, and so expose them to the pernicious influence of bad example, and other corrupting circumstances, that certain ruin will ensue?

Thus if the common doctrine of native depravity opens a door for speculative objections and cavils, you will also find that a host of them may be arrayed against every opinion which you are able to substitute in its place. The fact is, that there is no truth in morals or theology, which will not be swept away, if the objections which are urged by speculative men and cavillers, are allowed to be valid.

There is a theory, which was partly advanced by John Taylor, and which has been the subject of some discussion in our religious community. Those who adopt this theory, deny that man has any *native sinfulness*, any *original evil propensity*, or *innate depravity*. They maintain, however, that we come into the world with various appetites and propensities, which, though not *sinful*, are the *occasions* of sin; that these appetites and propensities gain strength by early indulgence, and become predominant, before any sense of right and wrong can have entered our minds; and that, when our moral agency commences, they are an overmatch for our reason and conscience, and in every instance certainly lead us into sin. They hold that we are born destitute of holiness, and of all disposition to holiness, and that we have in our own nature a ground of certainty that our first moral acts, and all that follow, will be sinful, unless we are born again; and finally that we are brought into these circumstances in consequence of the offence of Adam.

My sole object is to show that this scheme is exposed to objections and difficulties of nearly the same kind and degree, with those which have been urged against the doctrine of Calvinists. And if this is indeed the case, then any one who adopts this scheme for the sake of avoiding difficulties, will find himself disappointed.

In the way of objection to the common doctrine, it is said, that the Apostle does indeed teach that there is a connection

Digitized by Google

between Adam and his posterity, and that his offence brought ruin upon them; but he does not teach what the connection was, nor how it produced such an effect. He does not tell us that a sinful nature is propagated, or that we inherit it from Adam, or that his sin is imputed to us. — Now if it be true, that the Apostle does not teach in *what manner* Adam's sin produced this woful effect upon us; surely he does not teach that it did it in *the particular manner* which this theory implies. The advocates of this theory ask, where the Bible asserts that, on account of Adam's fall, a sinful nature is communicated to us at the beginning of our existence? And I ask, where it asserts that Adam's fall affected us in the manner which they describe, that is, by bringing us into being with such appetites, and in such circumstances, as will certainly lead into sin as soon as we are moral agents? If they say, the Bible does not tell *how* it was that Adam's sin affected us; then why do *they* undertake to tell how it was? Are they authorized more than others are, to go beyond what is written, and to point out the manner in which Adam's sin had an influence upon us?

But they make another objection to the common doctrine, namely, that it is incompatible with the justice as well as goodness of God to bring moral corruption and ruin upon the whole human race, merely on account of one offence of their common progenitor, and without any fault of theirs.

And is there not just as much reason to urge this objection against the theory just named? Its advocates hold that God brings the whole human race into existence without holiness, and with such propensities and in such circumstances as will certainly lead them into sin; and that he brings them into this fearful condition in consequence of the sin of their first father without any fault of their own. Now as far as the divine justice or goodness is concerned, what great difference is there between our being depraved at first, and being in such circumstances as will certainly lead to depravity the moment moral action begins? Will not the latter as infallibly bring about our destruction as the former? And how is it more compatible with the justice or the

Digitized by Google

goodness of God to put us into one of these conditions, than into the other, when they are both equally fatal? It is said that our natural appetites and propensities and our outward circumstances do not lead us into sin by any absolute or physical necessity. But they do in all cases *certainly* lead us into sin, and God knows that they will when he appoints them for us. Now how can our merciful Father voluntarily place us, while feeble, helpless infants, in such circumstances, as he knows beforehand will be the certain occasion of our sin and ruin? Those who advocate this scheme, say it is our own fault, if we sin. True. And it is equally so according to the common doctrine. But the question for them to answer is, why God, who desires our holiness and happiness, places us in circumstances, which will not only *expose* us to this fault, but which he knows will most certainly involve us in it, and so end in our destruction? They say, the doctrine of a depraved nature, as held by Edwards and other Calvinists, makes God the author of sin. Even if this were so, (which however I by no means admit;) still how does their theory help the matter? What difference does it make, either as to God's character or the result of his proceedings, whether he constitutes us sinners at first, or knowingly places us in such circumstances, that we shall certainly *become* sinners, and that very soon? Must not God's design as to our being sinners be the same in one case, as in the other? And must not the final result be the same? Is not one of these states of mankind fraught with as many and as great evils as the other? What ground of preference then would any man have? Suppose half of the human race should be born in a depraved, sinful state; and the other half, without holiness, and with such appetites and propensities as will be too powerful for reason and conscience to control, and so will certainly bring them into a depraved, sinful state, and that so speedily, that they never exist a single moment, as moral agents, in any other state. Would these last have any advantage over the former? And if the two states supposed are equally calamitous and destructive, then how is it more consistent for God to bring men into one of them, than into the other? And how

Digitized by Google

can it more easily be reconciled with his goodness that he should bring death and condemnation on Adam's posterity on account of his sin, in the way which is here supposed, than in the way which Calvinists suppose? Let intelligent, candid men, who do not believe either of these schemes, say, whether one of them is not open to as many objections, as the other? It is said that all the feelings of our hearts revolt at the idea, that God gives us a depraved, sinful nature at our birth, and that no man can believe this without resisting and overcoming his most amiable sensibilities. And do not our moral feelings equally revolt at the idea, that God creates us without holiness, and gives us at our birth such appetites and propensities, as he knows will forthwith bring us into a state of depravity? And have we not as much occasion to resist and overcome our amiable sensibilities in this case, as in the other? When they hold that God has so ordered things that we come into existence destitute of holiness, and with natural appetites which will always get the start of reason, and will be quite an overmatch for it when moral agency begins and which will *certainly* involve us in sin and ruin; — when they hold all this, are they not obliged to set aside their amiable sensibilities and all the natural feelings of their hearts, as unsafe guides in such a matter as this, — are they not obliged to overcome these natural feelings as really in maintaining their scheme, as others are in maintaining the common Calvinistic scheme? Prompted by these natural sensibilities, they make an outcry against the common doctrine, as though it implied something hard and injurious in God's treatment of his creatures. Whose act is it, they say, that gave us this sinful nature? And how are we to blame for that nature which God created? And whose act is it, I ask, that brings us into existence destitute of holiness, and with appetites and passions which certainly lead to sin? And how are we to blame for that which, according to the laws of the human mind, invariably and certainly follows from an act of God, or from that state in which he places us without any concurrence of our own?

Do they say the Calvinistic doctrine implies a *physical* deprav-

Digitized by Google

ity? But is not their doctrine much more liable to this charge? Calvinists hold that depravity originally and essentially lies in our *moral* nature. But they hold that it arises altogether from those appetites and propensities which are not moral, but *physical*. Thus they trace depravity to a *physical* source. They make the fatal danger of our condition lie originally in physical appetites. But they may perhaps think that they can avoid the difficulties of the Calvinistic theory by alleging, that sin comes not in reality from our natural appetites, nor from any external circumstances, as its proper cause, but from our *free will*, and that the acts of this free will are entirely our own, and that we are justly responsible for them. But on the principle which they have sanctioned by their objections against the Calvinistic theory, I ask; *who gave us our free will?* And who gave us *such* a free will, as would *uniformly* and *certainly* choose sin? Why did not God make our free will such, or at least place it under the influence of such circumstances, that its choices should be right instead of wrong? Might not God do this without interfering at all with the nature of a free will? Did he not give to the elect angels such a free will, and place it under such influences, that its choices would certainly be right? And does he not so renew the will of sinful men by his Spirit, and so direct the causes which act upon it, that it shall now begin to put forth exercises which are right, and shall finally put forth those which will be perfectly right, and that certainly and forever? And has not God done all this, and is he not continually doing all this, without interfering with the nature of free will? Why then, if God desires our holiness, does he not give us such a will, as shall freely conform to his law? Has not God a free will in directing this affair? And is not his free will attended with omnipotence? And if he had chosen to give us a will to put forth right volitions, could he not have done it? Why then did he not give us such a will? And if he has given us a different will, — a will that *certainly* acts wrong; how does he show his desire for our holiness? And how are we culpable for the acts of such a will, more than a comet is for its erratic motions? Who gave us this erratic will?

Digitized by Google

Thus it is, as Whately says; "The difficulty is not peculiar to any one hypothesis, but bears equally on all!" And yet I hold that the difficulty is of no avail, and proves nothing at all, except our ignorance.

Some have attempted to avoid the objection urged against the common scheme that it makes God the author of a moral nature which is polluted, by supposing that God creates the soul pure, but unites it with a polluted body — a body which tends to pollute the soul. Dr. John Taylor says, this supposition is "too gross to be admitted. For who infused the soul into the body? And if it is polluted by being infused into the body, who is the cause of its pollution? And who created the body?" Edwards turns these sensible remarks of Taylor against himself. He held that God creates the soul pure, but places it in a polluting *world*. "Here," says Edwards, "I may cry out, — who placed the soul here in this world? And if the world be so constituted as naturally and infallibly to pollute the soul with sin, who is the cause of this pollution? And who created the world?"

I shall briefly notice one more supposition by which an attempt has been made to avoid speculative difficulties, and, to account satisfactorily for the depravity of man. The supposition is, that human beings existed as intelligent, moral beings, in a state previous to the present life; that in that pre-existent state they all committed sin; and that they are now brought into the world with a depraved, sinful nature, as a just punishment for the sin which they committed in their former life, long before their present existence.

This theory is suggested in a philosophical manner by Julius Müller, Professor of Theology in Halle University. In order, he says, that man may be accounted guilty for the sin which is in him, it is necessary that he be its author. But man finds himself in a condition of sinfulness from the beginning of his earthly life. Let him go back as far as he may in self-recollection, he cannot bring to mind his first sin, and the earliest sinful act which presents itself to his consciousness, does not appear as the incoming of an altogether new element into the youthful life, but

Digitized by Google

rather as a development and manifestation of a hidden agency, the awakening of a power that had been slumbering in the deep.

After asserting thus explicitly the doctrine of our innate sinfulness, he proceeds to say: — Since, however, to originate one's own character is an essential condition of personality, and since from the very beginning of this life man's character is already determined, we are obliged *to step over the bounds of time, to find that power of original choice, which precedes and preconditions all sinful decisions in time.* (Biblioth. Sacra, vol. vi. pp. 253, 4.)

Moreover, sin is a universal characteristic of the human race. There is in all men an *innate sinfulness;* and yet wherever sin is, there is guilt, i. e. each individual is by his own self-determination the author of his sin. This would be a manifest contradiction, if there were not *preceding our earthly development in time, an existence of our personality as the sphere of that self-determination by which our moral condition from birth is affected.* Ibid. p. 265.

This supposition of our having existed and sinned in a state preceding our present life, is open to various objections.

The first objection is, that *it is destitute of proof.* There is no indication of a pre-existent state in our own memory or consciousness. If we question our own minds on this matter ever so carefully, we shall meet with no response. Nor is there any evidence in favor of the hypothesis from the word of God. In regard to the man who was born blind, our Saviour expressly declares that this calamity did not come upon him on account of any sin of his, that is, as seems to be implied, on account of his having sinned in a previous state, according to the doctrine of Pythagoras. And if native *blindness* did not come upon him for any offence previous to his birth, it would be unreasonable to suppose that the greater evil of *moral depravity* came upon him on this account. But I would not insist upon this. It is sufficient to say, that the notion of our having lived and transgressed the divine law in a pre-existent state, and of our being born in sin as a punishment for that antecedent transgression, is entirely destitute of proof. And if we should try to make out by reasoning, that

Digitized by Google

something like this must be supposed in order to account for the fact of our depravity consistently with the justice of God; our reasoning instead of proving the fact of a pre-existent state, would only prove our ignorance and presumption. This hypothesis, even if admitted to be true, would still fail of answering the purpose intended. Although it might furnish some plausible account of our innate depravity, it would cast no light on the fact of our having sinned in a previous state, and so would leave the great difficulty untouched. Why moral evil should ever be suffered to exist in beings who are entirely dependent on God and under his control, and how its existence can be accounted for consistently with the infinite perfections of God, is a question to which human wisdom, untaught from above, can give no satisfactory answer.

Besides, if God meant our native sinfulness as a righteous punishment for the sin we committed in a previous state of trial, we should suppose he would awaken in us some recollection, some definite consciousness of our previous offence, so that it might be possible for us to see and acknowledge our guilt, and the justice of his visiting us with such a calamity. But nothing like this has he ever done.

But there is one more objection to this theory, and one which has more weight with me, than any other; namely, that the Apostle Paul undertakes to account for our existing in a fallen, sinful state, and expressly traces it to the offence of our original father. He says, we are constituted sinners, not by any offence of ours in a pre-existent state, but by the offence of our common progenitor. Now if the theory under consideration be admitted to be true, it must also be admitted that the inspired Apostle was ignorant of it. For had such a fact been known to him, how natural would it have been for him to bring it into view, when it would have been so appropriate and so satisfactory. But his statement in Romans 5, is not only different from this Pythagorean hypothesis, but is opposed to it. If Paul's account of the matter is true, this hypothesis is false.

I must think then, that any one who adopts this hypothesis

Digitized by Google

does it without proof, and exposes himself to a far greater pressure of objections and difficulties, than what he aims to shun.

It will be evident I think from all which has been said, that the speculative objections, which have been urged by John Taylor and others, against the Scripture doctrine of our native depravity, cannot be regarded as of any decisive weight. The spirit, from which they originate, would, if permitted to prevail, demolish the whole fabric of religion. With those who indulge this spirit, just and sober reasoning has no influence, and truth becomes a dream. Let Christians then, take care not to give any countenance to it. It belongs not to them. Its proper residence is, *the carnal mind which receives not the truth in love.*

Be it then our watchful care, to guard against that spirit of mind, which shows itself in objections and cavils against the doctrines of God's holy word. How sharply did the sacred writers rebuke this spirit! They saw in their day, that "the thing formed" proudly rose up, and said to him that formed it, "*why hast thou made me thus?*" The Apostle regarded this question as the utterance of an impious, rebellious heart. A man who has this spirit of objection, may pretend to feel a respect for the perfections of God. But in reality he denies them. He takes a matter of fact, a well known principle in the divine administration, and says, that *it is inconsistent with God's moral attributes;* —which is the same as to say, that *God cannot be a just and good Being in doing what he actually does.* This is the radical fault of the objector in the present case. He ought to learn what is just and right, by learning *what God does.* Whereas he takes upon him to determine what God can or cannot consistently do, by his own mistaken notion of what is just and right, vainly assuming that God is altogether such an one as himself. A man who acts on this principle, is at war with the divine character and the divine administration.

I am aware that some make an objection of a more practical kind against the common theory, namely, that it tends to stupefy conscience, and to prevent a proper sense of the evil of sin. But in truth, who will be most likely to be deeply affected with the

Digitized by Google

evil of sin, — he that considers it as arising from the innocent appetites and propensities of our physical nature, or he that considers it as originating in a corrupt disposition, — in the sinfulness of the heart? What do facts show? Had not Calvin, Owen, Watts, Edwards, Brainerd, and others of like sentiments with them, as wakeful a conscience, as deep a sense of the hatefulness and inexcusableness of sin, and as active and successful a zeal in opposing it, as those who have denied our native sinfulness?

I have another suggestion. Would you test the truth of the different theories which are held on the subject of our depravity? Inquire then, which of those theories most naturally leads its advocates to fall in with the current language of Scripture, and to speak just as the sacred writers do in respect to the native state of man, and the necessity of his being renewed by the divine Spirit? Which theory leads its advocates to quote most freely and feelingly, the affecting representations of the Bible as to the deplorable state in which the posterity of Adam are born, to give to those representations the most obvious sense, and to dwell upon them with the greatest earnestness? To which of the theories is the solemn, impressive language of inspiration most manifestly and perfectly adapted? This test of truth may, in many instances, turn to great account.

In closing this Lecture, I shall just touch upon the proper, practical tendency of the doctrine which I have endeavored to defend. This can be satisfactorily ascertained by finding what its influence is, not upon the minds of those who discard the doctrine, but upon those who seriously embrace it as a doctrine of revelation. Go then to one of this number, to one who is intelligent and devout and given to reflection, and inquire what is his manner of thinking on this subject, and the effect which the doctrine has upon his feelings; and let him speak for himself.

There was a time, he will probably say, — and I remember it with shame and sorrow, when my heart was full of objections against the doctrine of our native and entire sinfulness. The thought, that God brings us into being in a fallen, ruined state, gave me great uneasiness. And my inward disturbance contin-

Digitized by Google

ued, until the Spirit of God, as I humbly trust, subdued my pride, and inclined me no longer to confide in my own understanding, but to submit implicitly to the wisdom of God. First of all, I adopted it as my maxim *to believe whatever God makes known in his word*, and *to be satisfied with whatever he does in his providence*. I determined to reject no truth, because it transcends my intellectual powers, or because it is attended with speculative difficulties which I cannot solve. I soon saw that the doctrine of man's native and total sinfulness is taught in the Bible, and is confirmed by experience and observation. The habit which I formed of contemplating *the doctrine itself*, just as it is set forth in the word of God, gradually enabled me to dispose of the difficulties attending it very satisfactorily. I have been brought to look upon sin, whether in disposition or in act, upon *sin itself*, wherever found, and in whatever form, and however occasioned, as *an evil and bitter thing, altogether blame-worthy and hateful.*

Considering myself as the subject of this evil from the beginning of my life, *as born in sin*, and contemplating the outgoings of my depraved, sinful heart in sinful actions, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. A deep conviction of sin has withdrawn my mind from the influence of philosophical speculations and questions of controversy. My first concern is to obtain deliverance from the power of sin, and to be made holy, as God is holy. I offer daily and fervent prayer to God, that he would sanctify me wholly; that he would increase my faith, and work in me all the good pleasure of his goodness. The belief which I have, that sin is natural to man, and that it extends its deleterious influence through all his faculties, excites me to great watchfulness and unceasing efforts against its subtle and powerful operations, and to a humble reliance on the help of divine grace. Viewing myself as by nature a child of wrath, and as deserving the whole penalty of the violated law, I am led to exalt the infinite grace of God in redemption, and to give glory to the Saviour who bestows eternal life on sinners. And when I come to consider, that this utter ruin is brought upon the human family by the offence of Adam, their federal head, I bow before that righteous Sovereign,

Digitized by Google

whose judgments are unsearchable, with a full persuasion, that all his ways, though past finding out, are perfectly holy, just, and good, and that sin belongs wholly and exclusively to *man*. Without the shadow of a doubt, I believe that what God does in constituting us sinners in consequence of the offence of Adam, he does in perfect consistency with his infinite holiness and goodness, and without the least infringement of our moral agency. I have done with the impious question, *why doth he yet find fault?* or, *why has he made me thus?* Who am I that I should sit in judgment on the attributes of God, or call in question the wisdom or the rectitude of his conduct? In a word, when I consider that I belong to a race of transgressors, that I am "the degenerate plant of a strange vine," and that the heart of every man is like my own, I see that all the world is guilty before God, that no flesh can glory in his presence, and that salvation is wholly of grace.

Such are the thoughts and feelings which naturally arise in the mind of a Christian, who is led by the holy Scriptures, and by his own spiritual convictions, cordially to embrace the doctrine of native depravity, and to make it a subject of devout meditation, and who rises above his speculative difficulties, not by a mere intellectual process, but by the power of holy affection. It seems to me exceedingly manifest, that whatever objectors may say, the proper tendency of the doctrine, when rightly received, is *to exalt God, to humble man, and to make the Saviour precious.* And happy shall I feel myself to be, if I have been enabled so to treat the subject, as to contribute to this most desirable effect.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXI.

REMARKS ON COLERIDGE'S VIEWS OF ORIGINAL SIN.

ALTHOUGH I have dwelt so long on the subject of human depravity, I have thought that it may be of use, before closing, to turn your attention to one of the recent authors who have given their views on the doctrine of Original Sin.

Everything which comes from Coleridge is marked with peculiarity. His habit of thinking and his style of writing are sui generis. Even where he really agrees with others, it often seems to his readers, and to himself, that he differs from them. He evidently *loves* to differ. He aspires after originality. In him this is probably no affectation; but seems to result from the singular structure of his mind. But in most of those who copy after him, it *is* affectation, and frequently of the most offensive kind and the most injurious tendency. For, as is common in such a case, they copy his excellencies far less than his faults.

Scarcely any writer has done so much as Coleridge to vitiate and deform the English language. Of this any man of classical taste will be satisfied, who reads his philosophical and theological works. He is the farthest of all writers from being a safe pattern. The movements of his mind are all eccentric. There is nothing like regularity, order, or system, in any of the productions of his pen. He can hardly confine himself to one subject through a single paragraph. If he enters on a serious discussion of an important point, he can proceed but a little way without

Digitized by Google

digressions. It is indeed true, that after a while he returns to his main point. But it is, in general, only to touch upon it, and ramble again. He gives you no such thing as a regular, finished discussion of any subject, or any branch of a subject. You will find nothing like unity in any of his prose writings. And if you wish to discover his opinion on any point, you must pick it up, a little in one place and a little in another. It is not his practice at any time to make a direct, clear, and full announcement of his belief on important subjects, and then to state the reasons on which it is founded. His manner is everywhere miscellaneous and rambling. — And yet you will find in his writings new and interesting ideas, very forcibly expressed. You will everywhere find indications of a fertile and original mind, — a mind capable of accomplishing much for the cause of truth, had it been guarded against eccentricities, and formed to a habit of clear, orderly thinking.

Coleridge introduces the subject of original sin by a quotation from Jeremy Taylor. Taylor says: "Is there any such thing as Original Sin? That," he says, "is not the question. For it is a fact acknowledged on all hands almost, and even those who will not confess it in words, confess it in their complaints. For my part, I cannot but confess that to be, which I feel and groan under, and by which all the world is miserable."

"Adam," he says, "turned his back upon the sun, and dwelt in the dark. He sinned, and brought evil into his supernatural endowments, and lost the sacrament and instrument of immortality. — His sin left him to his *nature;* and by nature, whoever was to be born at all, was to be born a child, and to *do* before he could *understand*, and to be bred under laws to which he was always bound, but which could not be always exacted; and he was to choose, when he could not reason, and had passions most strong, when he had his understanding most weak: and the more need he had of a curb, the less strength had he to use it! And this being the case of all the world, what was every man's evil, became all men's greater evil." After mentioning several circumstances which excite men to sin, and which produce a great

Digitized by Google

increase of offences, he finally says; "By these and ten thousand other concurrent causes, man is made more than most miserable."

Coleridge begins his remarks by saying, and that very justly, that "Taylor's meaning is not quite clear." Coleridge seems to think that Taylor ascribes sin to the influence of circumstances. In opposition to this idea, he says: "Sin is an evil which has its ground or origin in the *agent*, and not in the compulsion of circumstances." On this I remark, that in the case of Adam's sin, and the sin of David, of Peter, and Pilate, and others mentioned in history, there were circumstances which acted upon the transgressors as temptations. And the language of the historian implies, what their own consciousness made certain, that those circumstances of temptation had an *influence*, a *real and prevailing influence* over them. And it is a saying which the common sense of mankind pronounces to be true, that those circumstances *led* them to sin, or *drew* them *into* sin. We call such circumstances the *occasions* of sin, or motives to sin, — meaning motives or occasions external to the mind, and acting upon the mind from without. But it is well known, that outward motives acquire their influence by coming into contact with what is in the mind, its passions, inclinations, or desires. These are motives in a higher sense. The Apostle James says; "A man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." A man's affections and desires move him to act in view of outward objects. Both the outward and the inward motives have an influence. The outward cannot act without the inward, nor the inward without the outward.

The manner in which motives, whether outward or inward, influence to action, is what every man knows by his own experience. But one thing is clear, namely, that circumstances or motives do not influence a moral agent in the way of *compulsion*. That is, they do not influence him contrary to his inclination or choice, or *without* his inclination or choice. They do not supersede the complete action of the will, or any of the mental faculties. They do not *compel*, but *persuade*. It is not *force*, unless

Digitized by Google

that word denotes the power of considerations addressed to the mind, or the power of affections and desires within the mind itself. Motives no more compel *volition*, than volition compels *action*. If a good man comes to you, and successfully endeavors to induce you to avoid what is wrong, or to do what is right; he does not *compel* you. Though his arguments may be powerful in the highest degree, so that you might say, they are *irresistible;* still you do not call their influence *compulsion*. And if an artful tempter comes to you, and labors by earnest persuasions to draw you into sin, and prevails; however powerful the influence he exerts over you, you do not call that influence *compulsion*. And however urgent your inward inclinations, how great soever the strength of your affections or desires, in favor of good or evil; still you do not feel yourself *compelled*. The greatest and most effectual influence of outward and inward motives combined does not interfere with our moral and accountable agency. I think, therefore, that the pains which Coleridge takes to exclude the influence of motives or circumstances from the act of the sinner, and to prove that sin is the independent, self-originated act of the will, turns to no good account. For it is a fact, that the moment you attempt to conceive of an exercise of holiness or sin in a moral agent, without the influence of motives, you attempt to conceive of a nonentity. The influence of motives is involved in the very nature of rational, free, moral action.

We must infer, however, from the good sense of Coleridge, and from other parts of his writings, that his object was not to exclude the influence of motives entirely; but to show that sin, whether consisting in a mental *state* or mental action, belongs to *the person himself*, — exists *in his mind*, — and is strictly *his own act* or *state*, in contradistinction to the idea, that it lies in the influence of circumstances, or in anything which may be regarded as a cause or occasion of sin. In this he is doubtless right. For nothing is more certain, than that sin, considered either as a quality or an action, must be predicated of the *agent himself*. It is *he only* that *sins; he only* that is *sinful*. Moral good or evil lies in the person himself. When we predicate it even of his

Digitized by Google

action, internal or external, we still predicate it of *him* as the *actor*. When we say his love to God is praise-worthy, or his enmity to God is blame-worthy, our real meaning is, that *he*, the *personal agent*, is praise-worthy as a friend to God, or blame-worthy as an enemy. This is true, whatever may be the motives which influence him. In strictness of speech, neither holiness nor sin can be predicated of any *faculty* or *power* or *affection* of the mind. If we say good or evil lies in the *will*, our meaning must be, it lies in the person who has the will. If we say it lies in the *affections*, we mean that it lies in the *person* who exercises the affections. For the sake of convenience, we may say, that a man's *will*, or his *heart* is obedient or holy; and no mistake is likely to arise, because we are understood to mean, that the *man himself* is obedient or holy. The command to obey and to be holy is given to the *man*, the *person*, not, strictly speaking, to his *will* or his *affections*. God does not speak to a man's will or heart, saying, *thou will*, *thou heart*, shalt love God: for the *will* or *heart* is not the responsible person. The command is to the man,—*thou*, *O man*, shalt love the Lord thy God. This being kept in mind, we shall easily avoid a variety of misapprehensions to which we are liable when speaking of such subjects.

So far as I am able to judge, Coleridge nearly agrees with the old writers generally as to the meaning of the word *will*. The word is now most frequently used to denote the power of the mind to put forth what are called *executive volitions*. But Coleridge uses it to denote the whole *moral faculty* or moral *nature* of the man, and so considers all the affections, dispositions and emotions of the mind, as affections, dispositions and emotions of the *will*. Indeed it is the *will*, according to his understanding of it, that constitutes the responsible agent, the person, the *I* and the *me*, as he speaks. This he asserts and maintains with great zeal. And I am not disposed to call in question the correctness of the real opinion which I suppose he entertains, and means to express. But if any one who uses such language, means to signify that the will, by itself, constitutes the personal, responsible agent, or that it is any more essential to the existence of such an

Digitized by Google

agent, than other faculties of the mind; our judgment and consciousness at once decide against him. For we cannot doubt that reason and memory are as necessary to constitute a responsible person, as free will. When I speak of myself, and of my obligation and accountability, I refer as much to other attributes of my nature, as to the will. And it is just as proper to say, that *reason* constitutes a personal, responsible agent, as that *free will* does it.[1] Not only free will, but reason, and other mental attributes, belong essentially to a moral agent. And not only the *possession* of reason, but the *use* of it, is implied in every exercise of *free will*. Coleridge says, "Reason is the condition, the sine qua non of a free will." Of course, the will is not *absolutely free* and *independent*. Freedom is a relative term, when applied to the will, as well as when applied to anything else. When we say, the will is *free*, we do not mean that it is free in *all* respects, —*absolutely free*. If *reason* is the *condition*, the *sine qua non* of a free will, then a free will is not free from *reason;* and the *exercise* of a free will is not free from the *exercise* of *reason*. Now reason has to do with *rational considerations*, or *motives*. Motives then of some sort are the essential condition of all the acts of free will. And this is the same as to say, that the will, free as it is, cannot act without motives. The position then of Coleridge, that reason is the necessary condition of a free will, really contains the very doctrine of Edwards. A striking though not an unfrequent instance of one, who denounces the theory of Edwards, and yet holds, as he cannot help holding, to all the essential principles which Edwards maintains. The principles of Edwards are the principles which we are led to adopt by common sense, experience, and consciousness. You may *attempt* to set these principles aside, but you cannot. And if you think you *do* set them aside, your experience and consciousness will soon show your mistake. For you will find, that in all instances of choice and voluntary action, you are in fact influenced by motives, and that you cannot choose and act without motives.

I have said, that the will is not free from the influence of motives. I add, that it is not free from *established laws* or *prin-*

Digitized by Google

ciples of action. This has been shown by various writers, but by none so particularly and fully as by the Rev. Dr. Upham. If you would see the proof of this point carried to perfect demonstration, read his work on the Will. What the laws of volition are is ascertained by experience, in the same manner with the other laws of the mind. Whenever the will acts, or, more properly, whenever man acts in the way of willing, it is and must be in conformity with these laws. Say, if you please, the *will* is its *own* law. So be it. Still the law is fixed and uniform. It lies in the very *nature* or the essential properties of the will; and is as unalterable as they are. The will is of such a nature, that it does and must put forth its determinations or choices under the influence of motives. This is the law of the *will*, — or, if you choose, this is *the will.* From this law the will is not free; for it is not free from *itself.*

Again; the *will*, or the mind in willing, is not free from the divine control. He that created the mind with all its faculties, has dominion over it, and, in a way suited to its nature, directs all its actions. It is on this principle, and on this principle only, that God governs the world, and carries his purposes into effect.

If then the will is not free from the influence of motives, nor from those uniform laws which arise from the very nature of the will, and which are ascertained by experience, nor from the divine control; from what is it free? Experience and consciousness furnish the answer. The will of a rational, moral being, or a rational, moral being *in willing*, is free from *brute force*, or what is called compulsion. The mind in willing is not influenced by the power of gravitation, or steam, or the magnet, or by muscular strength. From all such influence it is and must be free, because it is a *will*, or a mind *willing.* Just as we say, *spirit* is free from matter, and from all the properties of matter. Which is only saying, it is *spirit.* So the *will*, or the *mind* in *willing*, is free from physical laws and physical influences. It does not act like anything in the physical or material creation. It does not come under the law of *physical cause* and *effect.*

Digitized by Google

Cause and effect can belong to the mind and the will only in a higher sense, that is, in a *rational*, *moral*, *spiritual* sense. And this is only saying, that the mind is a rational, moral, spiritual agent, and acts in a rational, moral, spiritual manner. It has a manner of acting, but that manner is as distinct and different from the manner in which anything in the material world acts, as mind is distinct and different from matter. Nothing else is *like it*, and nothing else *acts* like it. And although we do and must speak of the mind and its acts in language borrowed from the natural world; the language in that higher application has another and higher sense, — a sense, so far analogous to the primary sense, as to justify the language, but still as different as the subject to which it relates. And so far as I can judge, this is nearly the view which Coleridge really means to express. And here you may see in a moment the sophistry of certain writers, in their inference from Edwards's theory of the will. *Cause* and *effect* in the *physical* world have nothing to do with moral agency; they exclude it. But because the operation of physical causes excludes moral agency, how does it follow that the operation of causes of an entirely *different* nature, exclude it? We cannot logically draw the same conclusion in the two cases, unless the premises are the same, — the same not only in the words which express them, but in their *nature*. Now in the case before us, although the words cause and effect, and other words derived from things in the natural world, are applied to the acts of the *mind*, they are applied in a very different sense, and denote what is of a very different nature. Because, then, a certain proposition is true of the *physical* objects denoted by the words; it does not follow that the same is true of the *spiritual* objects denoted by the same words.' Because Edwards holds that the mind is subject to a *moral necessity*, he cannot be charged with holding that it is subject to a *physical necessity*. And as *moral* necessity is entirely different in its nature from *physical* necessity; none of the peculiar consequences which follow from physical necessity, can be considered as following from moral necessity.

Digitized by Google

To return now to our subject. Coleridge says, and says truly, that sin is a *spiritual evil*, and *that it originates in spirit;* not in *God*, but *in some spirit*. Nothing is more certain than this. Sin, that is, human sin, originates or has its origin, — begins or has its beginning, in the spirit of man. It exists there at first, and it continues to exist there. Coleridge says, it originates in the *will*. He uses the word *will* to signify the moral nature of man, — or the mind as possessed of a moral nature; and under the acts of the will he includes all the affections, as well as what are more strictly called volitions. The *will* being used in this wide sense, sin doubtless originates there. It originates or begins in man's spiritual nature. Coleridge speaks of "that state and constitution of the will which is the ground, condition, and common cause of all sins." I understand him to mean, the state of the *heart*, or the state of man's moral nature. This he represents as "the ground, condition, and common cause of all particular sins." I suppose he means to express, in his own language, the same as our Saviour expresses, when he says, "Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." This is very plain. All the particular forms of sin, whether acted out or not, "*proceed from the heart*," — Coleridge says, from "the corrupt nature of the will;" or "the state and constitution of the will." If by this he means the same as Christ means by the *heart*, he is on the line of truth. If not, his philosophy has led him astray.

When Coleridge represents "that the corrupt *nature* of the will must, in some sense or other, be considered as its own *act*," his meaning is not easily discovered. If he had said that the corrupt *nature* of the will *resulted from* an *act* of the will, or that the wrong *act* of the will *resulted from* the corrupt *nature* of the will, the meaning might be intelligible. But how the corrupt *nature* of the will is itself the *act* of the will, I know not. When he teaches "that the state and constitution of the will, is the ground and common cause of all" its sinful acts; he *speaks* plainly. But to say that this *state* of the will, — that its corrupt *nature* is its own *act*, seems not a little foggy. He says, too, that

Digitized by Google

the corruption of the will must have been *self-originated*. We know what it is for one thing to originate another, as for a man to originate an argument, or the plan of a house; but what is it for a thing either in the mind or out of the mind to *originate itself?* It would seem to be the same as for a thing to be the *cause* of itself, the ground or source of its own existence. But here comes a difficulty. To originate a thing is to exert a power or energy, or put forth an act, from which something *results*. Now a thing must *be*, before it can act in the way of originating anything. But here is a thing which *originates itself*. It does an act before it exists, and from that act its existence flows. The expression, that the corruption of the will or anything else is *self-originated*, is, strictly understood, an absurdity; or, if not an absurdity, it is *poetry*. Coleridge thinks this corruption of the will, this spiritual evil and the source of all evil, *because self-originated*, may properly be called *original* sin. But what need of resorting to this notion in order to justify the language? Why may it not be called original sin, because it is found in every man from the beginning of his moral existence, and is the consequence of that sin of our primeval parents, which was the first human sin, and from which the sinful character and state of his posterity result?

It will be seen that Coleridge has his eye upon the ninth Article of the Church of England, and justly objects to Jeremy Taylor, because he does not come up to the full meaning of the Article. That Article, which expresses the opinion of Luther, and Calvin, and even Arminius, and all the Churches of the Reformation, and indeed of all the Churches of Christendom, except Pelagians and Socinians, is as follows:—"Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk,) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil." The Westminster Divines in like manner consider original sin to be "the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of our whole nature," resulting from the one offence of Adam.

Digitized by Google

After speaking of the corrupt nature of the will, Coleridge says; "The admission of a nature into a spiritual essence by its own act, is a corruption." What now can be the meaning of this? By "spiritual essence," he means the *will*. But has not the will a *nature?* Has it not a nature as soon as it exists? Not in the view of our author. The *spirit*, the *will* he denominates *supernatural;* and our Transcendentalists do the same. A flagrant violation of the usus loquendi! Nothing is more common than to speak of the *nature* of mind or spirit, the *nature* of angels, and even the *nature* of God. But *here* the *spirit*, the *will*, which Coleridge thinks has no nature, *admits* a *nature* into itself. If he had said, admits a *corrupt* nature, it would be less difficult to understand him. But it admits a *nature!* Before, it had *no nature!*

Our author speaks of "the admission of a nature into a spiritual essence *by its own act.*" This spiritual essence, the will, before it has a nature of any kind, acts in *admitting a nature.* This is surely very abstruse language! The idea seems to be, that a *nature*, I suppose he means a corrupt nature, comes and offers itself to the spiritual essence or will, which has no nature, and the will, by its own act, admits that nature. Not content to be without a nature, it wickedly opens itself to receive the nature offered. He does not say, whether he or any other man was ever conscious of such a process as this; or whether he is compelled by his philosophy to imagine something like it.

But we have not come to the bottom yet. Coleridge says, "the *admission* of a nature into a spiritual essence by its own act, *is* a *corruption.*" The admission of it, i. e. the act of admitting it, is a corruption. We should think he means, that it is a *corrupt act;* that is, a sin. He elsewhere says, that the state and constitution of the will is the ground and common cause of all sins. But here the *act* of *admitting* a nature into the will, *is* a *corruption;* the corruption of the will not being the ground of this act. But the author solves this difficulty by resorting to something else no less difficult, that is, his notion that the corruption of the will is *self-originated.*

Digitized by Google

The statement which Coleridge finally makes of original sin, corresponds very nearly with the doctrine of Calvinistic Divines. It is this, that an evil inherent in the will, that is, in the moral nature of man, belongs to all men; that this corruption belongs to each individual, not because he has committed this or that crime, but simply because he is a man. This evil, which is common to all, must, he says, have a common ground. And this evil ground, he refers to the *will* of man; or, as I generally express it, to man as a moral being, or to his moral nature. This evil, which is inherent in all men at every period of their existence, and is the ground of all the forms of transgression, is what he calls original sin. He says, it is a *mystery;* by which he means, that it is "a fact which we see, but cannot explain;"—and he says "the doctrine is a truth which we apprehend, but can neither comprehend nor communicate." But though he says this, yet he tries hard to explain it, and to communicate it, that is, to communicate the idea of it.

One more remark. Coleridge says; "In respect of original sin, every man is the adequate representative of all men." He considers that Adam is taken as the diagram, i. e. the representative of the whole race, merely because he came first in time, not because his sin had any more influence upon the race than the sin of any other man. No other means of exposing the utter fallacy of this notion is necessary, than to attend to the Apostle's language in Rom 5. If every other man stands in the same relation to the race, and has the same influence upon them, as Adam, then you may substitute any other man, say Cain, or Esau, or David, in the place of Adam, and read it thus, by the offence of Cain judgment came upon all men to condemnation; by David's disobedience the many that succeeded him were made sinners; by one man, that is, by Cain, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so on. The Apostle most evidently meant to teach, that the sin of Adam had a real and fatal influence, and was the cause, the real though remote cause, of the sin and misery of all mankind.

Digitized by Google

I shall now close my Lectures on the moral depravity of man, by offering a few hints as to the proper manner of teaching the doctrine.

And here I should feel myself guilty of a great fault, if I did not refer you at once to the inspired writers, as the only safe and infallible patterns for Christian ministers. Human sinfulness was a very prominent subject with prophets and apostles, and with Christ himself. And as they were guided by infallible wisdom, we must conclude that they treated this, as well as every other subject, in the wisest and best manner. It is then of the first importance that you should apply yourselves to the study of the Scriptures, for the purpose of learning how to address men in regard to their character and conduct as sinners. See how inspired teachers treated this subject. See how they addressed individual transgressors, and how they addressed bodies of men. See how God himself spoke to the first offenders and those in subsequent periods of time, with a view to impress them with the evil of their conduct. See in what manner Moses from time to time spoke to those who sinned; and particularly in his farewell discourse just before he died, contained in the book of Deuteronomy. Attend to the faithful addresses of Elijah, Nathan and others to individual sinners, and of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc., to the people at large. But you will derive the greatest benefit from the teaching of Christ, who spake as never man spake. Make yourselves familiar with his various modes of address, and *learn of him.* Notice also the various instances mentioned in the Acts, of the preaching of the apostles, and the manner in which the writers of the Epistles labored to convince men of sin. Give yourselves to the study of the Scriptures, and make yourselves thoroughly acquainted with the thoughts and the language of the sacred writers; and make them your guides. See *what* they did in teaching human guilt, and *how* they did it; and see also what they did *not* do.

Digitized by Google

If you give a diligent attention to the Scriptures, you will particularly notice the following things.

1. You will notice that the inspired writers in their endeavors to convince men of their depravity and guilt, never make use of metaphysical or psychological arguments, and never introduce any metaphysical or philosophical theory, or any terms peculiar to such a theory. For example, you find nothing in the Scriptures like the theory which Coleridge and those of his stamp so often thrust upon their readers, and nothing of the phraseology by which that theory is expressed. Where do the inspired writers tell you that depravity is *self-originated;* that the corruption of the will which belongs to every human being from the beginning of life, is admitted *into* the will by an *act* of the will, and that every act of the responsible will is *self-determined?* I only ask, whether the inspired writers ever make use of such a theory to impress the evil of sin.

There is a class of preachers and writers, who continually refer to the metaphysical notion of *ability* in order to impress men with a sense of obligation, and the blame-worthiness of sin. They urge sinners to repent, because they are *able* to repent; to love God, because they *can* love him; and to obey his commands, because they have full and sufficient *ability* to do it. And they are always saying that men are culpable for committing sin, *because* they are able to avoid it. Now what I have to say is, that how much soever of metaphysical truth there may be in this notion of *ability*, it is what neither the prophets, nor Christ, nor the apostles, ever mention. I have referred to these speculative theories as specimens. I might go over all the metaphysical schemes of different sects, in regard to the introduction of sin, and the native character of man, and show that the sacred writers have nothing to do with any of them. They may teach the very truths which are meant to be contained in these metaphysical theories. But they never teach them in the *form* of metaphysical theories. They never use the peculiar terms of such theories; and they never fall into the particular modes of thinking and reasoning, which such theories disclose. Such theories, and such modes of thinking,

Digitized by Google

reasoning and speaking, are not adapted to the object which the sacred writers had in view, that is, to promote the spiritual good of common people. The sacred writers, having a just impression of the character and wants of human beings, and an ardent desire for their salvation, avoided as altogether unsuitable and incongruous, everything which approached to the form of philosophizing on the abstract nature of sin; just as enlightened legislators and judges do. The inference from this is manifest. Christian teachers should imitate the sacred writers. As Knapp says: "None of the profound and learned investigations of philosophers and theologians respecting the nature of human depravity, the mode of its propagation, etc., should have any place in the practical and popular exhibition of this doctrine." You cannot introduce any of these investigations into the pulpit without perplexing or misleading the common people, and occasioning great loss to their souls. Remember this, I beseech you, and address yourselves to men on the subject of their depravity and guilt, not in the manner of philosophical theories, but in the plain, serious, earnest, practical manner of the great Teacher, and his inspired prophets and apostles.

2. You will notice, that when the sacred teachers would impress men with their sinfulness and guilt, they generally set forth the *particular sins* both *outward* and *inward*, of which they are guilty. They charge men with actual transgressions of the divine law; with ingratitude, idolatry, rebellion, and obstinacy; with profaneness, Sabbath-breaking, and disobedience to parents; with actual murder, or with hatred in their hearts; with fornication, adultery, and impure desire; with evil speaking, falsehood, and perjury; with covetousness, dishonesty, and fraud; with forgetting God, with enmity against God, with pride, unbelief, hardness of heart, and hypocrisy. They charge men with these and other sins directly and fearlessly. And they point out the circumstances which go to aggravate their guilt, as the great goodness of God which they despise, the righteousness of the law which they transgress, the excellence and glory of the Saviour from whom they turn away, the greatness and preciousness of his

Digitized by Google

salvation which they neglect, the dictates of conscience which they violate, the clear light of the gospel against which they shut their eyes, its gracious calls and warnings which they will not hear. The sacred writers take off the covering by which men attempt to conceal their guilt from others, and from themselves, and bring out their evil deeds and evil affections to open view. In all this the sacred teachers have set us an example that we should follow their steps.

3. You will notice that Christ and the prophets and apostles taught men not only to look at the particular transgressions, open and secret, of which they are guilty, but to trace these sinful acts to a depraved nature, to an evil, wicked heart, just as they trace the badness of fruit to the badness of the tree. The inspired writers teach that the *heart* is deceitful and desperately wicked; that out of it proceed evil thoughts, and every kind of sin; that the carnal mind is enmity against God; that men are by *nature* children of wrath. In all this the inspired teachers are patterns for our imitation.

4. The sacred writers assert, and take pains to show, that sinners are without excuse. We should do the same. We should search diligently to find out what are the excuses, the plausible pretences or pleas, by which sinners try to justify themselves, or to palliate their guilt, and we should labor to show the utter futility of all such pleas and excuses, and to make sin appear as it is, utterly indefensible, and "*exceedingly sinful.*"

5. You will notice that the sacred teachers labor to persuade men to repent and believe, and to obey the divine commands, by various considerations. They do not always insist upon one and the same motive, but urge a great variety of motives. They often appeal directly to the moral sense, or conscience, requiring men to do what they know to be right and to avoid what they know to be wrong. They very often announce the divine command merely, without saying any thing to enforce it, relying upon the obvious reasonableness and goodness of the command, and upon the authority of God, as a sufficient enforcement. Sometimes they labor to persuade sinners to repent and obey the

Digitized by Google

gospel, by the forbearance and goodness of God, and the wonders of his grace in the redemption of the world. Sometimes they hold up the terrors of the Lord, the destruction coming upon the impenitent, the loss of the soul; and sometimes, the blessings of salvation, pardon, peace, and the indescribable joys of the heavenly world. They appeal to all the principles of action properly belonging to the mind of man, — to conscience, to reason, to fear, to hope, to love of happiness, to gratitude. — We should do the same, making use of one method or different methods, just as occasion requires.

6. You will notice that the inspired writers represent the evil of sin in a variety of ways, or hold it up in various lights. Some Divines always insist that sin, all sin consists in selfishness or a supreme love of our private, personal good. I do not by any means say, that this theory of sin is untrue. But you will notice, that self-love, or selfishness is only one of the many forms of moral evil of which the sacred writers speak. For the most part they present it in *other* forms and give it *other names*. And this they do with evident propriety. For who does not at once see the evil of enmity against God, of disobedience to God, of ingratitude, profaneness, falsehood, pride, malice and revenge; — who does not at once see the evil of these sins, without our undertaking to reduce them to the form of *selfishness?* You might perhaps more properly illustrate the evil of selfishness by showing that it is in opposition to reason and truth, and is a violation of God's holy law. But my direction is, study the Bible, and see how the inspired writers represent sin, and what terms they use to designate it. Their method is plain, intelligible, adapted to common sense, and suited to promote the welfare of all.

Here accept a general remark, namely; that if you cherish in your heart a serious, solemn feeling of the guilt and danger of sinners, and an ardent desire for their salvation; you will be led, by this very state of mind, to a right mode of address. A warm, tender, pious heart will prompt to suitable arguments and suitable language. Add to this, a deep sense of the presence of God, the love of Christ, and the value of the blessings he confers, and a

Digitized by Google

firm belief of the coming judgment. The more you feel as Christ and the apostles did, the more naturally will you fall into their manner of teaching.

Finally, while you take care not to go beyond the teaching of the Bible, you should take equal care not to fall short of it. All that the Scriptures contain on the subject of human sin is intended for our benefit. It is all suited to profit the souls of men, and so is proper to be introduced into discourses from the pulpit. The whole truth on this as well as every other subject, is better than a part. If you believe only a part, your mind will have an unnecessary contractedness. Your capacity is large enough to receive a great amount of truth; and the more you receive, the larger your capacity will be, and the stronger will be your understanding. Some keep their understanding weak, and their faith weak, by receiving so small a portion of truth. Truth is food to the soul. And there is truth enough in the Scriptures to nourish and strengthen you, to satisfy all your lawful cravings, and cause you to grow up to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Why should you stint the growth of your immortal minds and the immortal minds of others, by depriving them of any portion of their proper nutriment? Some men tell us that their creed extends no further than this; *that all men are sinners.* But the creed of the inspired writers extended further. What do the Scriptures teach as to the origin of depravity in every child of Adam, in John 3: 6 and Ps. 5: 5? What does Paul teach in Rom. 5, as to the influence of Adam's sin upon the character and state of his posterity? And what do inspired men teach in other places? If you believe in the divine authority of the whole Bible, why should you limit yourselves and those you teach to a part of it? Why deprive yourselves of the power to say in review of your ministry, as the Apostle did, *I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God?*

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXII.

THE ATONEMENT A SUBJECT OF PURE REVELATION.

We now proceed to a more pleasing topic, namely, *the redemption of the world by the death of a Mediator.*

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Thus the connection of human apostasy with the mission of Christ is very obvious. Had not mankind transgressed the divine law, there would have been no need of a Saviour. But as the whole race are transgressors, they must all have suffered the penalty of the violated law, had not a Saviour been provided. Human sin rendered redemption necessary. And the design of redemption was to remove the evil consequences of sin.

The doctrine of salvation by Christ is preëminently a doctrine of the gospel. It holds the highest place in the Christian system; and its practical results are inexpressibly important. But this subject has been sometimes treated so obscurely, sometimes so defectively, and sometimes so erroneously, — it has by one class of writers been mingled with so many faulty speculations, and by another class opposed with so much art and even malignity, that it becomes necessary to apply ourselves to the examination of it with special care, and with persevering diligence. And if we would avoid all misconceptions and perplexing difficulties, and arrive at a clear and correct view of the truth in relation to this momentous subject, it is indispensible that we should pursue the investigation on right principles, and under the guidance of proper rules.

Digitized by Google

It lies at the foundation of all right reasoning in regard to the work of redemption, *that it is a subject of pure revelation.* This I am aware is generally acknowledged. But how few strictly adhere to it. When men of a certain habit of mind come to examine the subject, they forget that all their knowledge respecting it is to be derived from the Scriptures, and that all their views are to be regulated by what the Scriptures contain; and they proceed as though they were able, in whole or in part, to draw out the truth by the mere exercise of their own intellectual powers, just as they do in mathematics. Their inquiry is, not what does the Bible teach, or what views did the inspired writers entertain, but to what conclusions are we conducted by speculative reason,— each one of course relying upon his own reason. It is not unfrequently the case, that while men derive the general doctrine of atonement from revelation, they do not rely upon revelation to give the doctrine its proper form, and to show its particular relations and uses. They undertake to settle all these points by reasoning. Whereas the proper form of the doctrine and its particular relations and uses are as really beyond the discovery of human reason, as the doctrine itself. Indeed they are to be considered as making a part of the doctrine.

The principle above stated is to be taken in its widest sense. *The doctrine of atonement in a general view, together with its particular form, and all its relations, circumstances and results, is to be considered as a subject of pure revelation.*

To illustrate this principle I remark, *first*, that *human reason, untaught by revelation, could never have known that God would in any way provide salvation for our apostate race.*

What is there in the state of human transgressors, which could move God to exercise mercy towards them, rather than towards the apostate angels? We have violated as good a law as they did. We are as really without excuse and as justly condemned, as they. And no created mind, looking at their condition, and at ours, could have discovered any reason why a distinction should be made, and why salvation should be provided for us and not for them. Nor would it have been possible for human reason, un-

Digitized by Google

taught by revelation, to take such a comprehensive view of God's attributes, and of the interests of his vast empire, as to authorize the least expectation, that those attributes and those interests would lead to our salvation, or even admit of it. Let any one think of man as a transgressor of God's perfect law and as exposed to its righteous penalty; let him consider too how important it must be to the welfare of a moral kingdom that a wise and good law should be carried into execution; and, if destitute of light from above, how could he suppose that the just penalty of that law would be remitted and the transgressor restored to the divine favor? All our reasoning from the character of the Supreme Legislator and Judge, and from the order and happiness of that kingdom over which he presides, must have ended in the conviction, that the punishment of the transgressor is inevitable. This is the view which intelligent Christians generally have entertained. They have considered the salvation of sinners as an event which the heart of man could never have conceived, and as exclusively the contrivance of infinite wisdom. Without revelation, we should have had no data on which to ground any hope for man, and our fearful conclusion would have been, that the sinner must die.

Secondly. On supposition that we had the knowledge of God's general purpose to save sinners, and nothing more, *it would be beyond the power of reason to discover in what way or by what means he would do this.* Unenlightened by revelation, how could we imagine such a thing, as that God would provide a sacrifice for sin, and that the sacrifice would be no other than his own beloved Son? Without revelation we could never have known that God had a Son, and much less that that Son would die for us. How could we, especially in this childhood of our being, attain to such a knowledge of the attributes of the incomprehensible God, of the principles of his government, and the interests of his everlasting kingdom, that we could determine, or even conjecture, that any sacrifice for sin would be admissible, or if any, what sacrifice it would be, and what influence it would have in making an atonement and preparing the way for the forgiveness of transgressors.

Digitized by Google

Thirdly. Suppose we had information from God's word, that he had provided salvation for sinners and had done it by means of a propitiatory sacrifice, and suppose the information from God's word extended no farther than this, *we should still be unable to determine what would be the results of such a provision.* We might suppose, and probably we should suppose, that the infinite goodness of God which made the gracious provision, would send the offer of it to every human being, and would cause every human being to accept it. But such a supposition would be a matter of mere conjecture, and would prove to be very wide of the truth. From what principles of reasoning, aside from revelation and fact, could we ever know that the sacrifice of atonement would be postponed for four thousand years from the fall of man, and that for near two thousand years after it was made, the knowledge of it would be communicated to only a small part of the human race, and that only a part of those to whom it would be communicated, would be induced to accept it? After all the instruction which God has actually given us, we are prone to think very erroneously on these subjects, and we find great labor and caution necessary to bring ourselves to adopt conclusions correspondent with the truth. Now if the tendency of our natural reason is so erroneous, that it is difficult even for the word of God effectually to regulate it, how wild and extravagant would have been its motions, had it been left without the influence of God's word!

I am sensible that it is exceedingly difficult, and perhaps impossible, to conceive what would have been the state of our minds, had we never been influenced in our habits of thinking by the light of revelation. And if we go to the heathen for the purpose of learning what is the state of the human mind when wholly uninfluenced by revelation, we are still liable to mistake. Because it is impossible for us to determine with certainty, how far the opinions which are almost everywhere found among them respecting the use of sacrifices to propitiate the gods, are to be traced back to an original revelation. It is impossible for us to know whether either the reason or the conscience of guilty man, independently of revelation, would ever have suggested the propriety

Digitized by Google

of attempting to appease the divine wrath by sacrifices. Those divine attributes, and those principles of the divine government, from which the work of redemption flows, lie beyond the ken of unenlightened reason, and for all our knowledge of them we are indebted to revelation. Without instruction from above, we should be as unable to judge what would be a safe and proper method for God to adopt in saving transgressors, as a little child would be to judge what would be a proper method of administering the affairs of an extensive empire. No one can judge of the wisest and best mode of administration in any government, without knowing perfectly the extent of the empire, its external relations, and all its present and future interests. This is specially true in regard to the divine administration.

The conclusion then to which our contemplations conduct us is, that the doctrine of the atonement in a general view, together with its particular form, and all its relations and circumstances, is a subject of supernatural revelation. The human mind, untaught by revelation, could not know that God would in any way provide salvation for sinners. Mere reason could not infer this either from the attributes of God, or from the principles of his government, or from the character and state of man. All these, so far as we could understand them without revelation, would lead us to conclude, that the transgressor cannot escape the punishment he deserves. And if we should be informed of the general fact, that God would save sinners, and of this only, we could not, by the use of our own unenlightened reason, form any clear conception of the manner in which he would do it. Certainly we could not know that he would accomplish the salvation of sinners through the sacrifice of his own beloved Son. And if we should be informed that such a sacrifice would be made, we could not determine what effect it would have on the divine administration, or what would be its results, — whether all men, or only a part of them, would be actually saved, and whether those, who would be lost, would ultimately receive any benefit from the gracious provision. The whole scheme, with all its circumstances and results, is the sole contrivance of the infinite mind of God, the result of

Digitized by Google

his unsearchable perfections; and for our knowledge of it, we are wholly indebted to his word.

But this conclusion does not by any means imply, that our reason has nothing to do with the doctrine of redemption. It could not indeed have discovered that doctrine by its own power, any more than the eye, by itself, could have discovered the most distant object which has been made visible by the telescope. But when the doctrine is brought to light by revelation, then we can understand it, and the principles which it involves. We can see its glory, we can dwell upon it in our meditations, and we can make it a subject of reasoning, just as we can employ our reason about those celestial bodies which have been brought to view by the power of the telescope. Though we could never have discovered them, and cannot now perceive them by the naked eye; yet, as they are by other means made visible, we can reason about their situations, their motions, and their mutual relations, and also about their relations to those objects which are visible to the naked eye; and we can lay down various true and important propositions respecting them, just as well as if they lay within the reach of our senses. The doctrine of the atonement could be of no avail to us, were we not by the proper use of our faculties capable of understanding it, of believing it, of forming rational propositions respecting it, and of making it a motive to holiness, and a means of salvation.

There can be no doubt, then, that our reason is to be diligently employed on this subject. Indeed it is a subject of such importance and excellence, that we shall be exceedingly culpable if we do not apply to it the highest efforts of our rational powers. But if we do this, our knowledge of its nature, and of its relations to God and his kingdom, particularly to man, will be perpetually increasing. After we have studied it with the utmost diligence for ages, we shall find that we have only begun to understand it, and shall be prompted, by the degree of knowledge we have acquired, to apply ourselves to it with a still deeper interest in ages to come.

There is one part of the general subject, to the consideration

Digitized by Google

of which it is especially suitable that we should apply our reason, namely, the effects which the doctrine of the atonement actually produces in the minds of men. This may properly be treated as a branch of mental philosophy. For we may learn the nature of the mind and the laws according to which it acts, by considering how it is affected by this doctrine, as well as by considering any other of its operations. The effects of this doctrine on the mind are frequently brought to view in the Scriptures, and are made known very clearly by Christian experience. And being thus made known, whether by Scripture or experience, they become the proper subject of reasoning, and the ground of general propositions respecting the manner in which our moral affections are influenced. And these propositions become important helps to us in our attempts to excite and direct the affections of others. On the principles which these propositions involve, the art of Christian eloquence and persuasion in a great measure depends.

We may be sure then, that our rational faculties have much to do in relation to the subject now before us. Our great concern is, that these faculties may be *rightly* employed. How this is to be done, — how we shall use our reason on this subject so as to find the truth, and secure its most beneficial influence, — is a question of great moment.

The general answer to this question is, that we should labor with assiduity, in the use of proper means, to get a clear understanding of the doctrine itself, and of all the circumstances attending it, and then learn to present it to the minds of others, as well as to our own minds, so as to produce the proper effects. In all this our rational powers are to be diligently employed. Here reason finds its best work.

But to be more specific; our first and great business is to apply our reason to the Holy Scriptures, for the single purpose of discovering what they teach on the subject before us. I shall consider it as a settled point, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is to be received and used as an infallible guide to our faith. It follows then, that our principal inquiry must be, what does the inspired volume teach? What do we learn from

Digitized by Google

the word of God as to the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ? Thus the great business which devolves upon us in the exercise of our rational powers, is to ascertain the meaning of the Bible. And this we are to do by applying to it the proper rules of interpretation. It does not fall within my design to show particularly what these rules are. I will only say, they are such as are suggested by experience, and approved by common sense. The general object to be aimed at is, that we place ourselves, as far as may be, in the circumstances of those who wrote the Scriptures, and of those to whom they were originally addressed. We are particularly to consider at what period of the world each part was written; what was the condition of the writer; what were the customs and other circumstances of the time when he wrote, and of the people for whom he wrote; what were the prevailing habits of thinking and of speaking; what were the errors to be opposed, etc. Such things as these are very important to be known, because they have a decided influence upon our understanding of the sense which the writer meant to express. A single example will suffice to show the value of this principle of interpretation. The Apostle Paul often represents Christ as sacrificed for us, or as a sacrifice for sin. To know what he meant by this representation, it is of essential consequence to consider, that he was a Jew, that he was deeply versed in the Jewish Scriptures, and familiar with the Jewish ritual, and that he represented Christ as a sacrifice when writing to those who were well acquainted with the sacrifices enjoined by the Mosaic Law, and who would necessarily understand him as speaking with reference to them, and in language borrowed from them. The question then is, not what a Hindoo philosopher, or a Hindoo priest, or a Roman orator means by a man's being made a sacrifice for his religion or his country, but what a *Jew* means, a Jew in the circumstances of the Apostle, a Jew strenuously maintaining the authority of the Old Testament, and appealing to it for the explanation and support of the Christian religion, and writing for the instruction of those who knew him to be a Jew, and would understand him as speaking on such a subject according to the sense of the Jewish Scriptures. The question is, *what does such a man mean by a sin-offering, or a*

Digitized by Google

sacrifice for sin? By pursuing this inquiry, we satisfy ourselves what must be the meaning of the Apostle when speaking in such a manner on such a subject. Here our work is ended. We have arrived at the sense expressed by an inspired writer. We see how he understood the subject; and we are to understand it in the same manner. None of our speculations, none of our controversies, none of our particular modes of thinking are to be brought in, either to add to the Apostle's meaning, or to take from it, or in any way to alter it. The sense which he evidently intended to convey must be received as an established principle, an ultimate truth; and then whatever becomes of the opinions of the world, or of our own previous opinions, this must be maintained. Our object must ever be, not to get such a view of the subject as we can best support by general arguments, or can, in our own way, show to be most rational, and least liable to the objections of philosophers; but *to think with the Apostle*, — to receive implicitly the sense of inspiration.

Suffer me here to suggest a few hints, which may prove useful in directing your inquiries and securing you from mistakes.

First. Labor for the increase of your knowledge in relation both to the particular subject under consideration, and other subjects related to it. To grow in knowledge is the most effectual way to free the mind from error. Error lives and thrives most where ignorance prevails. Every addition you make to the clearness and definiteness of your views, and to the extent and profoundness of your knowledge, will be one step towards the entire removal of error. If a man so directs his inquiries as to ensure a constant enlargement of his mind, and a constant improvement of his intellectual powers, his erroneous opinions will pass away of course, as the darkness of the night does before the rising sun.

Secondly. Cultivate right affections. Sinful affections are opposed to divine truth, and are a hinderance to a right faith; but they have a natural and close alliance with error. Sin will always act according to its own nature. Sometimes openly and sometimes covertly it will make resistance against the Gospel, and particularly against the Scripture doctrine of the atonement, — a doctrine which, when rightly apprehended and cordially received,

Digitized by Google

has an extraordinary efficacy in subduing the power of sin. Hence it is that men under the influence of depraved affections, have been led to deny or to evade the doctrine, or at least to misrepresent it, and to mix it with error, and thus to take away its sanctifying power. Men who are proud and selfish, yea, all the ungodly, have great reason to suspect the correctness of the views they entertain of the work of Christ. The spirit of their minds will more or less influence their belief in regard to the doctrine of the atonement; and if it cannot entirely prevent their receiving the doctrine, it will at least give it a shape at variance with the simplicity of the Gospel. Now if we would free ourselves from this exposure to error, we must labor, through the help of God, to subdue our depraved affections, which are all in league with error. It is often the case that a man does more towards obtaining right views of an important Scripture doctrine, *by mortifying one sinful passion, or by giving up one sinful indulgence*, than he could do without this, by the most laborious study for months or years. If then you would be sure of obtaining such views of redemption, as shall be conformed to God's holy word, take care to be rid of *sin*, that mist of darkness in the soul, and cherish that holiness which has both an eye to see the truth and a heart to love it. Be pure from sin, and keep yourselves under the noon-day light of revelation, and it will be no difficult task for you to understand the great, central truth now before you; nay, I was ready to say, this truth will come to you of its own accord, and will delightfully occupy that place in your soul, which you have thus prepared for its reception.

Finally. It appears indispensable to the right understanding of what the Scriptures teach respecting the mediation of Christ, that many mistakes should be corrected, many corrupt affections subdued, and much knowledge of God and of man obtained. Now if any one, instead of sitting with child-like docility at the feet of Jesus, and seeking the guidance of his Spirit, is inclined to undertake this arduous work in his own strength, and thinks that, by any labors or struggles of his, he can successfully accomplish it without divine guidance, it will be to his confusion.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXIII.

TEXTS WHICH TEACH THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT. FIRST AND SECOND CLASSES.

In my treatment of the doctrine of atonement, I shall endeavor to conform to the great principle laid down in the last Lecture, and shall make it my constant object to ascertain what the Scriptures teach. The instructions of God's word on this subject are, for the most part, so intelligible and plain that no attentive and candid reader can mistake their meaning.

Some writers discuss the subject of redemption on the general principles of moral law and a moral administration; that is, on the principles of *Natural Theology*, making the direct teachings of revelation of subordinate use, and only auxiliary to their main design. This it seems to me is far from being the proper and consistent mode of proceeding for those who receive the Scriptures as the word of God, and as the sufficient and only infallible guide of our faith and practice. I cannot but think that the word of God, from which all our knowledge on the present subject is to be derived, should first of all be consulted. We are not now to inquire, what the light of nature aside from revelation teaches, nor what men destitute of the Scriptures might be led to conjecture or to hope for from the common course of divine providence. If it is true that the doctrine of atonement in a general view, and also its particular form, its circumstances and results are to be considered as matters of pure revelation; then clearly we should go directly

Digitized by Google

to the inspired volume, and, in the diligent use of our faculties, endeavor to learn what it teaches respecting this subject.

My design is to lay before you the instructions which the Scriptures give respecting this subject in as orderly a manner as possible, arranging the texts, which pertain to the work of redemption, in distinct classes, first, taking those which are more general, and then proceeding to those which are more particular and specific.

The first class I shall introduce will comprise those texts which teach the general truth, that Christ is the Redeemer and Saviour of sinners. And you will here learn that Christ is a *Saviour* in a peculiar sense. Of the numberless passages which relate to this point, I shall refer to only a few of the most explicit. Matt. 1: 21; "And thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 18: 11; „The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." Acts 5: 31; "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour." See also Acts 4: 12. Gal. 3: 13. Tit. 2: 13. These texts, and others of like import, clearly reveal the truth, *that Christ is our Redeemer and Saviour, and that he is so by way of eminence* — a truth of inconceivable worth to all the posterity of Adam.

Second class of texts. The inspired writers not only teach that Christ is our Redeemer and Saviour, ascribing to him the general work of salvation; but they inform us *that our forgiveness and salvation are effected particularly by his sufferings and death.* Isa. 53. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." "He made his soul an offering for sin." Christ himself declares, that he came to give his life a ransom for many; that his blood is shed for the remission of sins; that we have redemption through his blood. See also Heb. 1: 3, and Rev. 1: 5. Passages which are of the same general import with these are found in many parts of the New Testament. From them we learn, that the special end of Christ's death was the forgiveness and salvation of men, and that whenever sinners are forgiven and saved, it is in consequence of his death. His death is the cause or means, and that preëminently, and their

Digitized by Google

forgiveness is the effect, or the end accomplished. In what specific manner Christ's death operates as a cause of forgiveness, it is not my present object particularly to show. But the texts quoted establish it as a clear and certain doctrine of the gospel, that the forgiveness of sin is, in a high and special sense, owing to Christ's death, or that his death is by way of eminence the cause or means of forgiveness. This is taught by such a variety of plain and unambiguous expressions, that we should think it impossible for any believer in revelation to doubt it.

And yet some who profess to receive the Scriptures as the word of God, do in fact not only doubt, but deny this doctrine. The most plausible and weighty reason which they assign for this, is the fact, that various passages of Scripture represent other things, besides the death of Christ, to be causes, conditions or means of forgiveness. To the chief of these passages I shall now refer.

Forgiveness and salvation are often ascribed to the *love* or *grace of* God. "By grace are ye saved." According to other passages, forgiveness is secured by *faith* and *repentance*. God requires sinners to repent and believe, that their sins may be blotted out. Sometimes *obedience* in general, or *a particular act of obedience*, and sometimes *prayer*, is spoken of as the means of procuring forgiveness and salvation. From this variety of representations, some have taken occasion to deny that the death of Christ is in any special sense the cause of our forgiveness — to deny indeed that it is so in any sense, except as it is a means of promoting our reformation. Here I shall suspend the main business I have undertaken, the business of citing in order the various classes of texts which exhibit the doctrine of atonement by the death of Christ, and go into a somewhat particular consideration of the argument above alluded to in opposition to the common orthodox scheme. My wish is to guard you against error on one side, and on the other against losing any portion of divine truth, and to show exactly what the word of God teaches. For this purpose I offer the following remarks.

1. *Our forgiveness may have a connection with several causes or necessary conditions.* Both in the natural and in the moral

Digitized by Google

world there is a complex system of causes and effects, a wheel within a wheel; and almost every principal cause has collateral or subservient causes, each contributing its proper share of influence to the general result. This is the case in regard to forgiveness and salvation. And the word of God would fail of doing full justice to the subject, did it not, first or last, bring distinctly to our view all the causes or conditions with which forgiveness is connected. This it does in the manner already stated. It represents our forgiveness or salvation as an effect of the grace of God, of the blood of Christ, of our repentance, our faith, our prayers, and our obedience. Accordingly these are all to be considered as really connected with our salvation, and as having an important influence in accomplishing it.

2. *The particular kind of connection which these things severally have with our forgiveness and salvation, and the way in which they contribute to it, must be learnt from a careful consideration of what the Scriptures teach, and of the nature and circumstances of the case.* In regard to this subject, the Bible furnishes us with a variety of facts. On these facts we are to employ our reason. We must consider them in their relation to each other, and to the subject of forgiveness, and endeavor to form consistent views of the whole doctrine revealed. An investigation of this kind will show that, while the love of God, the death of Christ, faith, repentance, prayer, and obedience, all have a real relation to forgiveness, it is not the same relation; that each one has a relation of its own, a peculiar relation, and a peculiar influence. Nor will it be difficult for any man who is qualified for such an investigation, to satisfy himself what that peculiar relation is.

Begin with the divine love. How is this connected with our forgiveness? In what sense is it the cause of our salvation? In regard to this, we are taught that God is the Lawgiver, Ruler, and Judge of the world, that men are all sinners, and exposed to suffer the penalty of the law, that God, being infinitely benevolent and desirous of saving them from the punishment they deserve, provided a Saviour, and took all the measures which he saw to be necessary to secure their salvation. He so loved the world that

Digitized by Google

he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The love of God then was the original cause of our forgiveness, the spring of our salvation. It was this which prompted God to enter on the design of saving sinners, and to carry the gracious design into full effect. So that when we contemplate the salvation of believers, we are to trace it back to the infinite love and benignity of God, as the source. Salvation and all the means of effecting it result from the infinite benevolence and compassion of God.

Come now to the death of Christ. How is this connected with our forgiveness? In what sense is it the cause or means of our salvation? To determine this, you must consider the nature and circumstances of the case. We had transgressed God's law. It was an essential provision of that law, that transgressors should be punished. This provision of the law then occasioned a serious difficulty in the way of our being saved. The penalty of the law, which disclosed a radical and unalterable principle of the divine administration, presented a mighty obstacle to our enjoying the favor of God. It was absolutely necessary that this obstacle should be removed, in order that we might have any prospect of eternal life. This obstacle Christ removed by dying for us. He redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. Thus his death was, in a peculiar sense, the cause of our forgiveness. It removed the obstacle which had been put in the way of our salvation by the transgression of the law; and so was, in a peculiar and eminent sense, the means of delivering us from the wrath to come. It directly procured our forgiveness.

By a similar process of thought, we ascertain the peculiar relation which repentance, and faith, and prayer have to forgiveness. The obstacle to our happiness which Christ's death removed, arose from the penalty of the law, or from that principle of a just moral government which was made known by the penalty. The obstacle to our salvation arising from our sinful character, still remains. And while this remains, neither the love of God nor the death of Christ can avail us anything. To enjoy the holy happiness of heaven with an unholy disposition, is an impossibility. Our turn-

Digitized by Google

ing from sin and becoming holy is therefore an essential condition of our enjoying the eternal salvation of the soul. Though that salvation has been provided for us by the death of Christ, we must be prepared to enjoy it by repentance, and must by faith, receive the good which divine grace has provided or we cannot be saved. Thus by repentance and faith we come actually to enjoy forgiveness and eternal life. Now whether you call repentance and faith causes of forgiveness, or means of securing it, or conditions on which God has promised it, they plainly have such a relation as I have just specified to our eternal life. And nothing is more evident than that this relation is entirely another and a different thing from the relation and influence which Christ's death has.

The same as to prayer. God has promised that when, in the exercise of a penitent and filial spirit, we ask him to forgive our trespasses, he will forgive them. Prayer then is an act of piety on our part, to which God has promised forgiveness, or it is an appointed means of obtaining salvation.

Thus we learn the particular relation which each of the things mentioned has to our forgiveness. And we might take the same view of other things related to our salvation.

Thirdly. It is manifest that the relations which the several things above-mentioned have to forgiveness, or the different senses in which they are causes or conditions of salvation, are *consistent* with each other, and that the proper influence which each of them has is not in the least diminished by the influence of the others.

These different causes of forgiveness are, I have said, consistent with each other. Who can doubt this? Who can imagine any inconsistency between the fact that God, in the exercise of infinite love, purposed the salvation of sinners, and the fact that Christ, in compliance with God's will, and to secure the ends of his government, suffered and died for our salvation? Instead of being inconsistent, they involve each other, and give each other support and efficacy. The strength of God's love was manifested in sending his Son into the world and appointing his death as a propitiation for sin. And what Christ did was only carrying into effect the gracious design of God. And all the influence which

Digitized by Google

Christ's death had in procuring our forgiveness, be that influence ever so great, was just what a benevolent God chose that it should have. If it is the cause or ground of our forgiveness in a very peculiar sense, and by way of eminence, it is so by God's gracious appointment. The influence then which the love of God has in accomplishing our salvation, comes through the death of Christ. It shows itself and secures its object by means of the atonement. Accordingly all the influence which the death of Christ has in procuring our forgiveness redounds to the glory of God's grace. And so it is often represented by the apostles.

It is equally obvious that the powerful influence which the Scriptures attribute to Christ's death, is consistent with the influence which repentance has in securing forgiveness. Had there been no atonement, repentance would never have existed; or if it could have existed, it could not have saved us from merited punishment. The influence of Christ's atonement must therefore be pre-supposed in order to account for it that repentance can exist, and can have any influence to secure salvation. All the influence of repentance results from the death of Christ. Repentance is a means, on our part, of obtaining the good purchased by Christ's death. The influence of Christ's death is therefore so far from being inconsistent with the sure influence of repentance, that it is the cause of it. And on the other hand, the sure influence of repentance in securing forgiveness, is so far from being inconsistent with the influence of Christ's death, that it results from it and shows its greatness.

The same is true of faith. Faith comes to the Saviour and receives him. But how could it do this, if no Saviour had been provided? Faith receives the atonement. It accepts the offer of forgiveness; which implies that an atonement has been made, and that forgiveness through Christ is offered to sinners. It is with faith then as it is with repentance; its operations are grounded on the death of Christ. It derives all its influence from the atonement, without which faith, such as the Gospel calls us to exercise, could have no existence.

This elucidation of the subject must, I think, be sufficient to

Digitized by Google

satisfy your minds as to the perfect consistency of the Scriptures, so that you will have no further reason to imagine that the important influence which repentance or faith is represented to have in procuring our forgiveness, interferes in the least with the position that the death of Christ is the cause of forgiveness in a special sense, and by way of eminence. Nor need we ever be apprehensive that our considering Christ's death as having the peculiar influence which the Bible ascribes to it in procuring forgiveness, will interfere at all with the appropriate effect of repentance or faith, prayer or obedience. The influence which each of these has is not in the least diminished by that of the atonement. On the other hand, the appropriate influence of Christ's death is not diminished by anything else. In the way in which it operates, it neither needs nor admits of any additional influence. In the high and peculiar sense in which it is the cause of forgiveness, it is the only cause.

Thus we exactly meet all the representations of God's word in relation to this subject, and reconcile them with each other; and thus we entirely rid ourselves of one of the most plausible objections against the common doctrine of the atonement. Should we assert, in universal terms, that the death of Christ is in every sense the only cause of our forgiveness, and that nothing else, either as a cause, means, or condition, has anything to do with it, we should assert what would be contrary to various parts of God's word. For it is frequently represented that other things, besides the atonement, are essential to forgiveness, and have an important influence in securing its benefits. But if we take into view the peculiar sense in which Christ's death is the cause of forgiveness, and the specific influence which it has in procuring it, we may then safely assert that, *in this sense*, it is the *sole* cause, and that in regard to an influence of this particular kind, nothing else is joined with it. In this way we have a very obvious and satisfactory explanation of a variety of texts, which expressly ascribe forgiveness and salvation to the death of Christ, and to that alone. For example, we are taught *that Christ's blood is shed for the remission of sins, and that we have redemption through his blood*,

Digitized by Google

the forgiveness of sins. In these and other passages, the blood of Christ, and that only, is mentioned as the cause or means of forgiveness; and nothing else is named as having any concern whatever in procuring salvation. And according to the views we have taken of the subject, nothing else *has* any concern with our forgiveness, *in the particular sense in which the death of Christ is concerned with it. In this sense, everything else is excluded.* And the Scriptures speak with perfect propriety when, with reference to this view of the subject, they ascribe forgiveness to the blood of Christ alone.

Now if our information on the subject extended no further, we should be in possession of a truth of everlasting importance to all human beings, — a truth relating directly to our salvation, and suited to excite our moral affections to the highest pitch of strength and tenderness. For who can adequately describe or conceive the value of *forgiveness*, or the height and depth of that divine love from which it flows? And who can believe that our forgiveness and salvation are procured for us by the sufferings and death of God's only-begotten Son — who can seriously believe this without pious astonishment, gratitude, and joy? In the heaven of heavens we hope better to understand the wisdom and goodness of the work which Christ accomplished, when he died on the cross for our salvation.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXIV.

ATONEMENT. THIRD, FOURTH, FIFTH, SIXTH, AND SEVENTH CLASSES OF TEXTS.

We have attended to those texts which teach that Christ is the Saviour of sinners, and to those which teach that he effected our salvation specially and preëminently by his death. We have also considered the difficulty which has been thought to lie in the way of our doctrine, from those texts which ascribe forgiveness to other things besides the death of Christ.

Some respectable writers have thought that our knowledge can be extended no further than what has now been stated; that everything beyond the general truth, that Christ is our Saviour and that his death is in some way the means of procuring our forgiveness, lies out of the limits of our intelligence; that this simple truth is all we need to know, or can know, and that any attempt to push our inquiries further must be wholly unsuccessful and useless.

My own opinion is very different from this. I am persuaded that, by a proper application of our rational and moral powers to what the word of God reveals, we may know more than the simple facts above mentioned; that we may obtain some more particular and exact views of the influence which Christ's death had in respect to our salvation; that we may understand the reasonableness, the consistency, and the excellence of the doctrine which the Scriptures teach, and may present it to our own minds

Digitized by Google

and to the minds of others in a manner that shall be suited to excite the best affections. As I would not be wise above what is written, so neither would I fall short of it. Without a clear apprehension of the meaning of what the Bible declares as to the death of Christ, how can we experience the whole of the salutary effect which the doctrine is designed to produce upon us, and which it evidently did produce on the minds of the apostles and primitive Christians. Take the general proposition, that Christ died for our salvation. This indeed is a proposition of immense importance, understood in any reasonable sense. But we are informed that the *apostles* also suffered and even died for the salvation of men. Now if Jesus died for the salvation of men merely as the apostles did, how does our obligation to him differ from our obligation to them? And how could the consideration of his death produce those peculiar and transcendent effects, which it has in all ages produced on the minds of Christians? It seems then necessary, that we should, in some measure, understand the particular sense in which Christ died for us in order that we may experience any special influence from the Scripture doctrine of redemption. Those Christians who most deeply feel the salutary influence of the doctrine of the cross, will find that this influence results from a clear apprehension of the peculiar relation which the death of the Mediator had to the divine law, and to the forgiveness and salvation of men. To say that we can know nothing of the manner in which the death of Christ procured forgiveness, would be to overlook the plainest declarations of Scripture.

We are now to notice another class of texts which relate to the death of Christ, and which will enable us to form more particular and definite conceptions of the design of that momentous event.

But here our attention is arrested by the circumstance, that *the suffering, dying Saviour was perfectly holy.* "In him was no sin." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," "a lamb without blemish and without spot." Allegations were indeed made against him; but they were all groundless.

Digitized by Google

Neither Herod nor Pilate could find him guilty of any fault. Even Judas, who had been so intimately acquainted with him, was compelled by his conscience to return the thirty pieces of silver, and to confess openly that he had betrayed innocent blood. We have besides what is the best of all evidence, the direct testimony of God the Father, who repeatedly declared by a voice from heaven — "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This remarkable circumstance distinguishes the sufferings of Christ from those of any other being whom we have ever known. The world has in all ages been full of suffering. And yet when did any intelligent, moral being suffer, except as a sinner? But here is a sinless sufferer. How shall we account for this fact? The principles of God's law as really ensure the safety and happiness of the obedient, as the punishment of the wicked. The Lawgiver sits on the throne, and does all his pleasure. He has often interposed to rescue his servants from suffering and death, though they were not free from sin. Why did he not prevent the death of his only begotten Son, in whom he had perfect complacency? But it is not only true that God permitted the death of Christ, but that it took place according to his special design and arrangement, and that he had a sovereign agency in it. Herod and Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, "did what the hand and counsel of God had determined before to be done." And Isaiah says expressly, that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him and to put him to grief."

Behold this singular and marvellous spectacle! The Son of God suffering and dying, though entirely innocent and holy, — never having violated or neglected any of the commands of God, — every thought and affection of his heart and every action of his life having been perfectly right, — his character adorned with consummate excellence and amiableness, adored of angels, and the object of the highest love and complacency of God! Such is the character of him whom we behold in a state of long-continued and indescribable suffering, and at last dying a most distressing and ignominious death! And all this comes upon him by the

Digitized by Google

special appointment and agency of God! What shall we say to all this? If we witness the voluntary infliction of pain upon a moral agent, for example, upon a child by a parent, or upon a citizen by a civil officer, we cannot avoid the impression, that it indicates displeasure. This is its natural meaning. Is it said, that we sometimes inflict pain upon a child from love, for his improvement and welfare, and that, in such a case, it is no token of displeasure? I reply, that we may sometimes inflict pain in this way, as a remedy for *bodily* disorder. But where the subject is of a moral nature, where a rational mind is concerned, this can never be the case. If we inflict pain upon a child as a matter of correction, it implies that there is something to be corrected,—some fault which we disapprove, and which we look upon with displeasure. If we do not, it is impossible to conceive why we should chastise the child. In our penitentiaries, where reformation is the object directly aimed at by hard labor and confinement, and where this is pursued with the purest benevolence, it is always the case that those who are subjected to this species of discipline, have faults and vices to be reformed, and these excite the disapprobation of civil government and of the community. But Jesus had no fault, and of course he had nothing which needed to be corrected or reformed. The peculiarity of the case therefore still presses upon us. God inflicts the most insupportable evils upon one, who is perfectly holy, who has nothing faulty to excite disapprobation, or call for correction. Upon him God inflicts those severe sufferings, which we cannot but regard as expressions of *high displeasure*. And yet the sufferer himself is the object of God's perfect complacency and delight. Here are three facts, plain and certain. First, God inflicts evil on Christ; second, the law of our nature requires that we should regard the infliction of evil upon a moral agent, as indicating the displeasure of him who inflicts it; third, Christ who suffered, being perfectly holy, could not be the object of divine displeasure. These facts cannot be set aside or altered. The suffering was real; the laws of our nature are fixed, which require us to consider suffering in a moral agent as expressing the displeasure of him who inflicts

Digitized by Google

it; and the perfect innocence and holiness of Christ, being as certain as eternal truth can make them, must forever forbid the thought, that he could, in whole or in part, be himself the object of the divine displeasure.

Here then we are brought to a stand. The laws of our nature and the general principles of moral government would lead us to think, that the displeasure expressed by suffering must always be directed against the one who suffers. But this is not the case here. We must then look for some new fact or circumstance, which will help us to explain the singular event under consideration.

We are thus brought to the *third* class of texts which relate to the death of Christ, and which make known the all important circumstance we looked for. Christ, who was perfectly holy and who deserved no evil at the hand of God, *died for our sins.* Isa. 53: 5, 6, 8; "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." "For the transgression of my people was he smitten." The apostles taught the same. Romans 4: 25; "Who was delivered for our offences." 1 Cor. 15: 3; "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Gal. 1: 4; "He gave himself for our sins." 1 Pet. 3: 18; "Christ also hath once suffered for sin."

On these texts, which are all of the same character and construction, it might seem unnecessary to make any remarks, as it must be a difficult and hopeless undertaking for any one to turn them aside from their true and obvious meaning. But a little examination may still be of use. If there is the least ground of doubt as to the sense of these texts, it must arise from the variety of significations belonging to the prepositions *διὰ, ὑπὲρ, περί.* In the text Romans 4: 25, it is said that Christ was delivered for our offences, (*διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν.*) The first meaning which the best lexicographers give of the preposition *διὰ* with an accusative is, *on account of, because of, in consequence of, for the sake of.* Christ was delivered to death on account of, or because of our sins. In 1 Cor. 15: 3 *ὑπὲρ* is used. Christ died

Digitized by Google

ὑπὲρ των ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. This preposition also must here signify *on account of*, or *because of*, as there is no other signification which would agree at all with the scope of the passage. The same remarks apply to Gal. 1: 4, where the received text has ὑπὲρ and Griesbach περὶ. "He gave himself *for* our sins;" that is, on account of our sins.

Now what instances can be found, in which dying for the sins of others denotes, as the Socinians pretend, dying as their example, or simply for their improvement? When the prophet Ezekiel said; "The son shall not die for the iniquity of his father," who ever supposed the meaning to be, the son shall not die for the *reformation* or *benefit* of the father? We might just as well suppose that, when it is said a man shall die for his own iniquity, the meaning is that he shall die for *his own* benefit. When we say, a man dies *for his own sins*, our meaning always is, that he dies *on account* of his sins, dies *because* he has committed an act of wickedness. Accordingly, when it is said that a man dies for the sins of *others*, the meaning must be, that he dies on account of or in consequence of their sins, dies *because they* have done wickedly.

The texts which have now been cited, furnish a full solution of the difficulty which met us in regard to the death of Christ. He could not suffer and die on account of his own sins, for he was perfectly sinless. He could not die as an expression of the divine displeasure against himself personally; for he was the object of God's perfect complacency. The simple question then is, why did the holy Saviour die? The Scriptures answer; "He died *for our sins*." "He was delivered *for our offences*." Here we have one of the peculiar facts which revelation makes known, and which we shall now consider in some of its obvious bearings.

Christ suffered and died not on account of any sin in himself, but on account of our sins. Our sins, that is, the sins of men, were *the reason why he suffered*. It is implied, that *his sufferings had substantially the same relation to our sins, as our own sufferings would have had, if we had suffered for them ourselves*. Now every one knows the relation between sin and suffering, where

Digitized by Google

the sinner himself is the sufferer. When it is said that any individuals, as Cain, Pharaoh, and Jeroboam, suffered for their sins, the sense is so clear that we cannot mistake it. And how can we mistake the sense of the texts which declare, that Christ suffered for *our sins?* When God inflicts evil upon men for their own sins, he shows his righteous displeasure against *them* as transgressors. He shows that he disapproves of their sins, and disapproves of them as sinners; that he regards them as criminal and ill deserving. The same must be implied in the Scripture declaration, that *Christ died for our sins.* His death showed the holy displeasure of God, not against *him*, but against *us*. It showed that God regarded not *him*, but *us*, as deserving of punishment. The very terms of the proposition imply, that whatever excited the displeasure of God, and whatever made the sufferings of Christ necessary and proper, was *in us*. You see the holy Jesus in a state of extreme distress, sinking and dying under the insupportable burden which was laid upon him. If Christ had been a transgressor like one of us, God's treating him thus would have manifested feelings of holy displeasure against *him*. But as God treats him thus on account of *our* transgressions, all the feelings of displeasure which he manifests respect, *us*. The Scripture does as much as to say; *mistake not the meaning of this transaction. The burden of sufferings laid upon Jesus is indeed an expression of God's high displeasure; but it is not against the person who suffers, but against those for whom he suffers.*

Now if we would enter into the spirit of revelation, we must consider the death of Christ in this light. When we contemplate his sufferings in the garden and on the cross, we must consider them as manifesting the same disapprobation of our sins, the same just displeasure of God against us, as would have been manifested by our suffering for our own sins. I take into view the whole evil, present and eternal, which sinners deserve according to the law of God, and then ask myself what impression would be made of the character of God, and especially of the manner in which he regards sin, if we should see him actually inflict all this dreadful evil upon transgressors. The same impres-

Digitized by Google

sion should be made upon us by the sufferings of Christ. I do not mean, that this is all the impression we should receive from Christ's sufferings. Far otherwise. But so far as respects the feelings of the divine mind in relation to the evil of sin, and the ill desert of sinners, Christ's suffering for the sins of men should make the same impression upon us, as would be made by their suffering for their own sins; — the same as if we should stand on the borders of the pit, and see a world of sinners enduring the penalty of the violated law. All this is plainly implied in the simple fact, that Christ died for our sins. The very fact that it was the appointment of God that Christ should suffer for our sins, would naturally lead us to think, that his holiness and justice would be as highly honored, and all the good ends of punishment as fully answered by *his* sufferings, as they would have been by ours.

My *fourth* class of texts will include those which teach *that Christ died for sinners*. I introduce these texts under a distinct head, because they teach the important truth just exhibited before you, in another form, and so confirm the sense which has been given of the texts already quoted. This is a mode of proceeding which is of great consequence in ascertaining the meaning of revelation. If one part of Scripture leaves a subject involved in any doubt, we go to the other parts to solve that doubt. If one class of texts present a subject in only one point of view, we go to other classes where it is presented in other points of view. And when, as in this case, texts of one class have a definite sense, and furnish us with views of a subject which are clear and unquestionable, it gives additional satisfaction to find that the Scriptures are harmonious, and that these same views are, by other texts, set forth with equal or superior clearness.

The following are among the principal texts which present this subject in a *personal* light, and declare that Christ died *for sinners*. Rom. 5: 6; "In due time Christ died *for the ungodly*." Rom. 5: 8; "While we were yet sinners Christ died *for us*." Luke 22: 19; "This is my body which has been given *for you*." John 10: 15; "I lay down my life *for the sheep*." 1 Pet. 3:

Digitized by Google

18; "Christ suffered, the just *for the unjust.*" In all these passages the same preposition is used, that is, ὑπὲρ. The meaning of this preposition is various, and must in each passage be learnt from the circumstances of the case. In the passages above quoted, it evidently signifies, not merely for the benefit of, but *instead of, in the place of;* that is, it denotes that Christ was *our substitute*, or that his sufferings were *vicarious*. This meaning of the word ὑπὲρ is demanded by the circumstances. Sinners are condemned to die. Christ dies for them, and they are released. That is, *he dies instead of their dying*. This is what is meant by Christ's dying as our substitute. Storr says; "When substitution is spoken of, it is of course not meant, that the punishment is merited by the substitute himself. Vicarious or substituted punishment is a punishment endured on condition that the individual, who would otherwise have been exposed to it, shall be released." Take now some of the texts quoted, and see whether they do not clearly convey this idea of substitution. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We were sinners and must have died, had not Christ died. But his dying procured our release. *He died*, and in consequence of it, *we live*. He died as our substitute. I do not here go into any reasoning on the subject of substitution. My present aim is to determine the exact sense of the texts above quoted. Take the passage which informs us, that David, hearing of the death of Absalom, cried out, "Would God I had died *for thee*, O Absalom, my son, my son." Here the circumstances of the case show that he meant to express a wish, not that he had died for the *benefit* of Absalom, but that he had died *in his stead*. He was overwhelmed with the death of his son, and under the influence of his extreme affection and grief, wished that he himself might have died and his son lived.

"I lay down my life *for the sheep*." Jesus here presents himself before us in the character of a shepherd. The sheep are in danger of being destroyed by the wolves. The good shepherd interposes, and lays down his life to save theirs. He dies in their stead.

Digitized by Google

"Christ died *for the ungodly*." The ungodly are under sentence of death from the divine law. Christ dies to save them from dying. He dies as *their substitute*.

You will observe that I derive the idea of substitution, not chiefly from the particular preposition *ὑπὲρ*, which expresses the relation between Christ and sinners in regard to suffering, but from the nature of the case. Accordingly my conclusion would be the same, if we had only the representation, that sinners were under sentence of death, and that Christ died to procure their release.

The notion of substitution, or vicarious suffering, is, I have said, derived chiefly from the circumstances of the case, not from the use of a particular word. For in different circumstances, the same word conveys a different sense. For example. A parent who is extremely attached to his children, devotes himself to constant labors and cares for their benefit, that is, to feed and clothe them and provide for their happiness, and pursues this object so anxiously and incessantly, and with so little regard to his own health or life, that he brings upon himself premature infirmity and death. We say, such a parent labored and suffered and even died for his children, that is, for *their benefit*. Here the circumstances show, that it was not in *their stead*, because they were not considered as particularly exposed to death; and it was not to save them from dying that he submitted to those exertions which proved so fatal to him. Take another case different from this. Acts 21: 13; Paul said "I am willing not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem *for the name of the Lord Jesus*." Here the same preposition is used, *ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ*, which must mean, not as a substitute for the name of Jesus, but for the sake of it, or for the honor of it.

A man of a patriotic spirit voluntarily exposes himself to suffering and death, to procure for his country the blessings of liberty. He dies *for his country*, not in his country's stead, but to secure his country's liberty.

In such cases as those I have now introduced, the circumstances make it obvious that substitution is not intended.

Digitized by Google

But now suppose a father is doomed to death by the sentence of public justice, and the day fixed for his punishment is come, and he is led out for execution. But his son comes forward to the civil authorities, and says to them; I offer myself to die *for my father*. Every one would understand him to mean, that he was to die in the place of his father, or as his substitute. So if a man was sentenced to imprisonment, and his friend should offer to submit to imprisonment *for him;* we should understand it to be *in his stead*, or by way of substitution. Again. Suppose you read in history, that it fell to the lot of a particular soldier to go forward in the face of danger, and make an onset upon the enemy; that that soldier was a timid, tender youth, unaccustomed to the field of battle, and that his brother, skilled in war and fearless of danger, undertook to go *for him*. You understand the history to mean, that he undertook to go *in his stead*, or *as his substitute*. We see then what the principle is. When any persons have a danger to meet, or an evil to endure, and another person meets the danger or endures the evil *for them*, and in consequence of his doing it they are exempt, we always regard it as a case of *substitution*.

The difficulties attending the doctrine of vicarious sufferings, and the cautions necessary to be observed in our reasonings about it, will be particularly considered hereafter. My only object here is to show that, notwithstanding the various senses of the preposition ὑπὲρ, *for*, its proper meaning may in each place where it is used, be satisfactorily ascertained from the circumstances of the case.

The two classes of texts last cited, present the subject under two forms of speech. But as we have seen, the two are in reality one. Christ's suffering was substituted for ours. But suffering is a *personal* matter, and cannot be separated from the sufferer. So that if Christ's suffering was substituted for the suffering which we deserve, then Christ, as a sufferer, was substituted for us. Both modes of speech convey the same sense. For Christ's sufferings to be substituted for our sufferings, and for him, as a sufferer, to be substituted for those who deserve to suffer, is one and the same thing.

Digitized by Google

We come now to the *fifth* class of texts. In three passages, Christ is represented as a *ransom*. Matt. 20: 28. Mark 10: 45; "The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom, λύτρον, for many." 1 Tim. 2: 6; "Who gave himself a ransom for all," ἀντιλύτρον. The meaning of these words is the same, the price paid for the redemption of captives. In its general metaphorical use, it means that by which any one is delivered from bondage, or from any state of suffering. As applied to sinners, it is the means by which they are delivered from the power and punishment of sin. Wahl refers to the text above quoted, 1 Tim. 2: 6, and says, "Christ is there represented as having, by his death paid the full penalty for human transgressions, and as having thus restored men to liberty." The words λύτρον, ἀντιλύτρον, translated "ransom" signify the real and proper cause of deliverance. In the case before us, Christ crucified was the ransom.

Sixth class. The passage Gal. 3: 13 is so peculiar, and so full of meaning, that I present it under a distinct head. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The curse of the law is the penalty of the law. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Christ redeemed us, bought us off, from this curse of the law, by being made a curse for us, that is, by being made an accursed person, or by having a curse inflicted on him. If Christ had not been made a curse for us, we must have borne the curse of the law ourselves, that is, we must have endured the punishment due to us for sin. But by being made a curse for us, that is, by suffering and dying on account of our sins, or in our place, he delivered us from the curse. Which is the same thing as to say, his suffering was instead of ours, or was vicarious. Storr explains this passage to mean, that "Christ in our stead endured the punishment denounced by the law."

If any one can possibly doubt whether this is the same idea, as the inspired writer meant to convey, he must, I should think, have his doubt solved by the texts which follow, in which it is expressly said that Christ actually bore our sins, or that our sins were laid upon him. These texts constitute the

Digitized by Google

Seventh class. Isa. 53: 6, 12; "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." "He bare the sin of many." Heb. 9: 28; "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." 1 Pet. 2: 24; "Who his own self bare our sins, in his own body on the tree." When it is said that men bear their own sins, that God lays their iniquities upon them, we know the meaning to be, that they bear the punishment of their sins, — or that God inflicts the punishment they deserve. When therefore it is said that Christ bare our sins, the meaning evidently is, that he bare the punishment due for our sins; and when it is said, that God laid on him the iniquities of us all, the meaning is that God laid on him the punishment of our iniquities. This is a free way of speaking; but no intelligent, candid man can fail to discern the meaning. Christ's suffering takes the place of the punishment of our sins, and so is designated by the same word, a mode of speech not unfrequent in the Scriptures.

You see the advantage of looking at these two modes of representation together. In the first, it is declared that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. This plainly appears to mean, that for the sake of delivering us from the penalty of the law, or the punishment of sin, he endured it for us. But to learn more fully whether this is indeed the meaning of the passage, we go to those passages where Christ is said expressly to bear our sins, that is, the punishment of them, and where God is said to lay our iniquities upon him, that is, the punishment due on account of our iniquities. Here we have strong confirmation of the sense we gave to the other passages. And if we should compare all the texts which relate to this subject, we should find them harmonious in sense, and conspiring to teach the same great doctrine, that Christ delivered sinners from the wrath to come, by suffering and dying in their stead. This is what the word of God teaches, and what the church of Christ in all ages has received. How we can make it harmonize with the philosophical speculations which are abroad in the world, is not our concern. The workings of human reason may be right, or they may be wrong. It is enough for us that our doctrine is taught by those, who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXV.

ATONEMENT, EIGHTH, NINTH, TENTH AND ELEVENTH CLASSES OF TEXTS, CONSIDERATION OF A DIFFICULTY AS TO THE DIFFERENT ENDS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

In the *eighth* class of texts I include those which represent Christ as taking away our sin. John 1: 29; "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." 1 John 3: 5; "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him was no sin." According to the best philologists and expositors the verb αἴρω which the common version in both these passages renders *take away*, signifies *to bear*, *to take upon one's self*, or, metaphorically, to *expiate*. "Behold the Lamb of God," the Lamb consecrated to God, that is, the sacrificial Lamb, which takes upon itself the sin of the world, a representation like the one so often made, that Christ bare our sins. Storr and Flatt support this rendering. The word αἴρω sometimes means to bear or carry, as to bear or carry a cross. Sometimes it is used to express the taking up and carrying away of a couch or a dead body. Schleusner, Professor Stuart and others understand the phrase αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν as signifying to remove sin by taking it upon one's self, and consider the expression, "Behold the Lamb of God," etc., as taken from the victims or sacrifices upon which the sins of the people were transferred by the Jewish priests. Behold this divine or consecrated Lamb

Digitized by Google

How could a lamb take away sin in any other way, than by making expiation? The same as to the other passage, 1 John, 3 : 5; "He was manifested to take away our sins,"—to bear, or to expiate our sins, to remove them by taking them upon himself.

Ninth class. The texts which speak of Christ as being *made sin*, or *a sin offering*. 2 Cor. 5 : 21; "For he hath made him who knew no sin, to *be sin for us*," ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν. Wahl renders the text thus, "whom for our sakes he regarded and treated as a sinner;"—Schleusner, "whom on our account he punished and treated as a sinner." This comes to nearly the same thing with the meaning given by other philologists, who make ἁμαρτία signify a sin offering. It is very clear that the word ἁμαρτία has this sense in Heb. 9 : 28, where the words "He shall appear the second time without sin," must mean, he shall appear *without any offering for sin;* because they form an antithesis to what is said just before, "that Christ had once appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

There are various other passages in which Christ is represented as a sin offering, or expiatory sacrifice. I cite only the two following. Isa. 53 : 10; "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Eph. 5 : 2; "Christ hath—given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." This representation agrees perfectly with the texts before considered. "When a sin offering was made," "the expiatory victim was, in accordance with the will of the Lawgiver, placed in the stead of the sinner, and punishment, though not precisely the same which would have been inflicted on the sinner, was executed on it." And the point of resemblance between the Jewish sacrifices and the death of Christ, evidently consists in the pardon of offences effected by vicarious suffering.

In regard to all these representations, the apostles, who were Jews and who addressed themselves to Jews, must have intended to be understood in conformity with those views of the subject which were set forth in the Jewish Scriptures. From

Digitized by Google

those Scriptures it appears beyond all controversy that the design of the sin offerings was to procure forgiveness; that is, to save from merited punishment those for whom the offerings were made. Their efficacy consisted in this. They did procure forgiveness; that is, *to a certain extent* they prevented merited punishment. They did not indeed procure forgiveness *in the highest sense*. Forgiveness in this sense is what the sacrifice of Christ procured, as the Apostle to the Hebrews tells us; and it was this which distinguished his sacrifice from all the sacrifices for sin prescribed in the Mosaic law. The Apostle teaches that, however important and necessary those sacrifices were, and however great their influence for the time being in averting various merited evils, they all fell short of procuring forgiveness in the highest sense, that they had no power to prevent the punishment of sin in a future world, or to secure to transgressors the special favor of God and the enjoyment of spiritual peace. This was reserved for the death of Christ to do. But inasmuch as those previous sacrifices had a real, though a limited influence, they are made use of to set forth the higher influence of Christ's death. And we learn from the New Testament that they were intended for this very purpose, and that the influence they had in saving transgressors from particular punishments, aptly represented and was designed to represent the influence of Christ's sacrifice to save sinners from eternal death. So that as the death of the animals which were sacrificed according to divine appointment to make expiation for sin, was to a certain extent accepted by God instead of the punishment of transgressors, and so to the same extent procured remission; in like manner the death of Christ was, in the most perfect sense, accepted by God instead of the punishment of sinners, and so procured for them a perfect remission. In both cases alike suffering was inflicted on one being to make expiation for the sins of other beings, that is, to save them from the sufferings they deserved. The suffering of one is substituted for the suffering of others,—the death of one for the death of others. Thus

Digitized by Google

the sufferings of the animals that were offered in sacrifice, and the sufferings of Christ, were really and altogether vicarious. By divine appointment they came in the place of the sufferings of transgressors.

Tenth class. Take now the texts in which Christ is called a *propitiation for sin*, as Rom. 3 : 25, 1 John, 2 : 2—4 : 10, the words ἱλαστήριον, ἱλασμός, and others used in the same sense, correspond perfectly with the different classes of texts already cited. They present Christ as a *propitiatory sacrifice*, a sacrifice which *expiates* sin, and procures exemption from merited punishment. In other words, they present Christ as suffering and dying on account of our sins, so that suffering and death might not come upon us. For a satisfactory criticism on the word ἱλαστήριον I refer you to Storr, Bib. Theol. and to Schleusner, Wahl, Robinson.

The *eleventh* class includes those texts which represent Christ as *reconciling us to God*. In order to understand the true meaning of these texts, and their bearing upon the subject before us, we must consider that the sense frequently affixed to the word *reconcile*, is not the sense it has in Scripture. In common discourse, when sinners are spoken of as reconciled to God, the meaning generally intended is, that they cease to be enemies to God and become his friends; whereas the Scripture declaration, that men are reconciled to God, means *that they obtain divine forgiveness and favor*. See how the word is used in Matt. 5 : 24; "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, first be *reconciled* to thy *brother*, διαλλάγηθι, and then come and offer thy gift." "First be reconciled to thy brother." Thy brother is offended; go and give him satisfaction, and obtain his favor, and then come and offer thy gift. This is the only sense the passage will bear. When we have committed an offence against our neighbor, if a reconciliation is brought about, it must consist in our giving him satisfaction and obtaining his forgiveness. It was said of David, 1 Sam. 29 : 4; "Wherewith shall he *reconcile himself*, or *be reconciled* to his

Digitized by Google

master?"— that is, to Saul, who had become an enemy to David. For David to be reconciled to Saul, did not mean for him to lay aside his enmity and become a friend to Saul, but for David, in some way, to satisfy Saul, and induce him to lay aside his enmity and become a friend.

These remarks, which accord perfectly with the views of the ablest writers, will help us to understand the meaning of those texts in which Christ is set forth as the means of reconciling us to God. Rom. 5 : 10 ; "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "We were reconciled to God by the death of his son;" that is, we were brought to enjoy the forgiveness of sin and the favor of God by the death of Christ; his death procured for us the divine forgiveness and favor. 2 Cor. 5: 18 ; "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." That is, God hath forgiven our sins and received us to favor through Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. 5 : 19 ; "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The last clause explains the former. God is reconciling the world unto himself — he is showing mercy to the world, not imputing their trespasses unto them, that is, forgiving their trespasses and receiving them to favor : and all this by or through Christ, — which other texts show to be by his death, by his cross, and by his blood. I shall add Rom. 5 : 11 ; "By whom we have now received the atonement," καταλλαγὴν, reconciliation, that is, forgiveness of sin and restoration of the divine favor.

If we examine the texts in the Old Testament, which speak of an atonement made by the sacrifice of animals, or those which refer to the atonement made by Christ, we shall come to the same result. For they all point out an expiation for sin, a sacrifice which was intended to procure for transgressors the divine forgiveness and favor.

Digitized by Google

To the view I have taken of the end of Christ's death an objection has been urged, which may properly be considered in this place. The objection arises from those texts which represent Christ's death as designed to promote *other ends, particularly our sanctification.* It is on these texts that Dr. John Taylor, with great plausibility, founds his opinion of the atonement, which is the same in substance with the prevailing system of Unitarians. As the texts referred to declare that Christ came and suffered to save his people from their sins, to wash and cleanse them from sin, and to make them obedient and holy, that writer considers this as the great, and, I may say, the only thing effected or intended to be effected by the death of Christ. And as he believes that our repentance and sanctification can be effected only by the influence of motives, he thinks that Christ's death was designed merely to produce such an influence upon our minds; that is, to lead us to repentance; and that our repentance, not the death of Christ, is the real and immediate cause or ground of our forgiveness. What unnatural violence he practises upon all those texts which relate to the propitiation which Christ made for sin, any one may see by consulting his treatise on the atonement.

I deem it unnecessary to go into a particular examination of Dr. Taylor's reasoning in the work above mentioned. The simple and all-important question is, what do the Scriptures teach? To this question we have already attended. Now when we find that, on any subject, views differing from each other are taught in the Scriptures, our proper business is to inquire carefully what those different views are, and whether there is any satisfactory method of showing that they are consistent with each other.

In regard to such a subject as this, I would remind you of the important and essential principle, that as "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," we must derive our religious opinions, not from any one part of it, but from the whole. And when the Scriptures present a variety of views of the same subject, our faith, instead of fixing exclusively upon one of those views, must include them all. Unless it does this, it is not a Scriptural faith.

Digitized by Google

Dr. Taylor's scheme is a striking instance of the violation of this principle. As the Scriptures teach that Christ suffered and died for the purpose of sanctifying sinners, he concludes that this was the only purpose in view. Some writers commit a similar mistake on the opposite side. As there are many passages which declare that Christ suffered and died to make propitiation and procure forgiveness, they conclude that *this* was the only thing intended, and that sanctification and eternal happiness were not procured by his death. Now surely the different representations of Scripture as to the design and the effect of Christ's death ought all to be attended to, and to have their proper effect upon our minds. Accordingly we ought to consider Christ's death as designed to answer *several* important ends, one of them primary, and others secondary and subordinate. But these ends are perfectly consistent with each other, and in reality imply each other. The perfection of our faith requires that we should properly regard all the ends exhibited in God's word, and should endeavor to form clear apprehensions of their respective nature and importance, and of their relation to each other.

Having made this general remark as to the manner in which we ought to treat the Holy Scriptures, I proceed to consider the particular difficulty which has been supposed to attend the common doctrine of Christ's death, arising from those texts which teach that he died to promote our sanctification.

First. Impartial regard to the word of God requires us to say that several of those texts which have been supposed to teach this, do in fact convey a different meaning, — a meaning which is coincident with the texts already adduced to show the special design of Christ's death. I begin with 1 John 1 : 7 ; "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The declaration that *blood cleanseth*, refers to the sacrifice of animals by the appointment of God, in which the shedding of blood procured remission of sin, or exemption from punishment. This is the only way in which blood could cleanse. I remark also that one of the senses of the verb καθαρίζει, *cleanseth*, according to Schleusner and others, is, *to expiate, to procure remission of sin*, or as Wahl

Digitized by Google

has it, "*to purify by an expiatory offering*," referring to this same text, and to Heb. 9: 22, where it is said, "Almost all things are by the law (καθαρίζεται) *cleansed* by blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission." The last phrase explains the former. As to 1 John 1: 7, the connection proves that the sense I have given is the true sense. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," that is, makes expiation for all sin, and procures complete forgiveness. The Apostle proceeds directly to show that we need forgiveness, and how we may secure it to ourselves. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just *to forgive our sins*, and *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*," — two forms of expression which appear to mean the same thing. Rev. 1: 5; "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," etc. Here we find similar phraseology, — "washed us from our sins in his own blood." The word here used is not καθαρίζω, but λούω. The metaphor lies in this word. Giving the word the sense assigned to it by the best Lexicographers, which is indeed nothing more than taking away the metaphor, we may express the meaning of the passage thus: "Unto him who loved us, and made expiation for our sins, and procured our forgiveness by his own blood," etc. There are other texts which convey the same sense, as Heb. 13: 12; "Jesus, that he might *sanctify* the people with his own blood," etc., meaning probably that he might *make expiation for sin* and *procure forgiveness*. Eph. 5: 25; "As Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it" (ἁγιάσῃ). According to Schleusner, that he might free the church from the penal consequences of sin. Other similar texts might be cited to which the same construction may be given.

But far be it from me to suppress or to pervert any text which represents it as an object of Christ's mission and death, to effect the moral reformation of men. The renovation of sinners by the Spirit of God is one of the greatest of all blessings. It is abundantly evident from Scripture, that this blessing is one of the effects of Christ's mediation and death, and is included in the great salvation which he procured for us.

Digitized by Google

To make this matter perfectly plain, and to show that the texts which speak of sanctification as an end of Christ's death, present no difficulty in the way of the doctrine which has been supported in these Lectures, I invite your attention to the following remarks.

First. The two ends which have been brought into view *are perfectly consistent.* The one does not in the least degree interfere with the other. Admitting that the primary end of Christ's death was to make expiation for sin, and to procure forgiveness, we may also consider moral purification as a blessing which his death was intended to procure. This may have been as really an end of his death, and may as really flow from it, as if it had been the only end. On the other hand, forgiveness may have been the end and the primary end of Christ's death as really as if this had been the only end proposed. If any one denies this, he must show that there is something in one of these ends which makes it inconsistent with the other; that is, he must show that forgiveness of sin is a thing of such a nature that it cannot consist with sanctification. He must show that a pardoned sinner cannot be sanctified, and that a sanctified person cannot be pardoned. For if pardon and sanctification may consist together, then both of them may have been secured by Christ's death. And so the texts which represent one of these as the end, may be perfectly consistent with those which represent the other as the end. And we may very properly copy after the inspired writers, and say at one time that Christ died to make propitiation and procure our forgiveness, and at another time that he died to redeem us from the power of sin and to make us holy. The great mistake is, to understand either of these as the end *exclusively* of the other.

But *secondly. One of these ends*, that is, forgiveness, *is not only consistent with the other*, that is, sanctification, but *is directly promotive of it.* Or to express this more fully, the consideration of Christ's death as the means of procuring our forgiveness and restoring us to the divine favor, is a most powerful and efficacious motive to holiness. It was so treated by the apostles; and it is perfectly evident that it actually produced this effect upon them. It is every way suited to produce this effect. If we go through

Digitized by Google

the universe, we shall find no motive which, in point of efficacy, can be compared with this. Whatever there is in the brightest displays of the perfections of God, especially in the glory of his holiness, in the terrors of his justice and wrath, and in the riches of his love, and whatever there is in the highest vindication of his law and government, and in the clearest demonstration of the worth of the soul and the value of eternal life, it is all found here. The fact of Christ's death as an expiatory sacrifice, and the divine mercy displayed in it, has reached those whom nothing else could reach; has melted hearts of adamant; has constrained the chief of sinners to repentance, love, and obedience. Now surely if the doctrine of Christ's death, as designed to make atonement for sin and to procure our forgiveness, is the most powerful of all means to promote our moral purification, it must be proper to represent his death as designed also to promote this important object. Indeed the first end could not be made known to us without exerting a powerful influence in favor of the last. It must exert this influence while the laws of the moral world remain as they are.

If I were to undertake a full discussion of the subject, I should endeavor to show how superior our views of the death of Christ are to those of Dr. John Taylor, and of Unitarians generally, in respect to that moral reformation of man, which they believe to be the only end of the atonement. All experience shows that this end can never be promoted by the death of Christ, if regarded according to their system, with half the success, as if it is regarded as an expiatory sacrifice for sin. So that, in sober truth, man's moral purification is an end which Christ's death accomplishes far more certainly and in a far higher degree according to our system, than according to theirs.

Thirdly. I must go further and say, that *the first end* of the atonement above-mentioned *not only is consistent with the second*, and *actually promotive of it*, but *really includes it*. What I mean to affirm is, that the expiatory death of Christ cannot actually secure our forgiveness in the largest sense, without effecting our sanctification. For what is forgiveness, taken in the large and

Digitized by Google

comprehensive sense intended? It is the removal of all the evils involved in the penalty of the law; of all the evils consequent upon sin in regard to our present and our eternal state. And what are these evils? The penalty of the law is commonly understood to involve death temporal, spiritual, and eternal. It involves not only present suffering and death, but the evil of being for ever in a state of enmity against God, and the misery of being under his wrath, banished from his presence, and excluded from communion with him and from the fellowship of holy beings. Now to be saved entirely from the penalty of the law, is to be saved from all those evils which it involves. It is to be saved from the misery of being under the wrath of God, and of being banished from his presence. To be fully pardoned is to be saved from this miserable condition. But how can we be saved from the wrath of God without being restored to his favor? And how can we be saved from the evil of being banished from God without being restored to the presence and enjoyment of God? And how can we enjoy God and be happy in his presence, without being holy? And how can we be happy in the society of angels and saints in heaven, without feelings congenial with theirs? The substance of what I would say on this point is this; to enjoy God is the chief happiness of man, and would have constituted the chief reward of perfect obedience. To lose the enjoyment of God must then be the chief misery of man, and the chief evil involved in the penalty for disobedience. Now forgiveness implies that we are delivered from this evil. And being delivered from the loss of anything, implies that what was lost is restored. Forgiveness then in the large sense, complete forgiveness, implies that we are restored to the enjoyment of God; and this implies that we are possessed of the disposition of mind which is necessary to such enjoyment; and this disposition is holiness. So that complete forgiveness, that is, the complete removal of those evil consequences of sin which are indicated by the penalty of the law, necessarily implies that we enjoy that good which we cannot enjoy without being made holy.

These considerations, I think, are sufficient to place the subject

Digitized by Google

in a satisfactory light, and to evince that the doctrine of Christ's death which I have endeavored to defend, is encumbered with no real difficulty. The texts which Dr. Taylor makes the foundation of his reasoning, and which represent it as an end of Christ's mediation that he might sanctify sinners, are obviously and perfectly consistent with those which teach that he died to make expiation for sin, and to procure our forgiveness. The two classes of texts are consistent, because the two ends which they bring into view are consistent. Christ may seek and accomplish this end, our forgiveness, consistently with his seeking and accomplishing the other, our sanctification. This is the first remark. The second is, that the accomplishment of the former of these, as the primary end of his death, tends directly to promote the latter. The third remark is, that the accomplishment of the former in the largest and most complete sense, necessarily implies the accomplishment of the latter. In the first and second remarks, I speak of the two as distinct ends of Christ's death, and so they are often represented in Scripture, and so we may very properly represent them, because although they are really parts of one and the same great end, that is, the salvation of sinners, they easily admit of being considered distinctly; and such a distinct consideration is sometimes important and necessary. The last remark presents them as united in one whole, consisting of parts which are in their nature inseparable. Now this being the case, it seems perfectly just and proper that the inspired writers should sometimes speak of one of them, and sometimes of the other, as the end of Christ's death, and sometimes of both taken together, as constituting one comprehensive end. And it is proper for us to imitate them in each of these modes of representation, as circumstances may require.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXVI.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE END OF CHRIST'S DEATH HARMONIOUS. METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE USED BY THE ORTHODOX AND BY THE SACRED WRITERS RESPECTING GOD AS A JUST MORAL GOVERNOR. OBJECTIONS AGAINST IT CONSIDERED.

In regard to the end of Christ's death, the opinion which now prevails probably to the greatest extent among those who reject the common doctrine of the atonement, is, that he died to declare the mercy of God, to make known by a public sign his readiness to forgive, and so to encourage and influence sinners to repent. Others make it the special end of Christ's death to bear testimony to the truths he had taught; to manifest his own fortitude; or to set us an example of obedience and submission.

Now if those, who entertain these different views of the end of Christ's death, mean to assert that these were the only ends of Christ's death, I would refer them to those numerous texts which show that he died for another purpose, that is, to make propitiation for sin. If they assert that any one of these was the chief end of Christ's death; then I would refer to the texts which clearly give the other end a peculiar prominence, and which admit of no fair interpretation which does not place that end above all others. But if any assert merely that these are real ends of Christ's death — ends in a subordinate, consequential, or collateral sense; to this I agree. Because, although the Scriptures may nowhere distinctly speak of all of them as objects of Christ's death, it can be satisfactorily shown that they are either involved in what we

Digitized by Google

consider to be the principal end, or result from it. And it can be shown, too, that Christ's death, considered as an expiatory sacrifice for sin, conduces much more powerfully to these subordinate ends, than if it is considered in any other light. If Christ died to make propitiation for our sins, and to procure our forgiveness; then surely, as this event was the appointment of God, it is a manifestation of his mercy, and of his readiness to forgive. For if he were not merciful and ready to forgive, why should he give his Son to prepare the way for the exercise of his mercy in forgiveness? And finally, there is no view of Christ's death, which invests it with so much power to lead sinners to repentance, and none which shows the fortitude of Christ to so great advantage, or gives his example such influence over our minds, as that view which we have taken of it. When the inspired writers make an attempt to display most clearly the mercy of God and his readiness to forgive, or to move sinners to repentance, or to set before us the personal virtues of Christ, or to persuade us to copy his example; they exhibit in one form or another the extraordinary fact, *that he died for our sins.*

In previous Lectures, I have endeavored to bring distinctly to view what the Bible teaches concerning the death of Christ, and to show that the various representations which it makes of the design of that event perfectly agree among themselves. But this important subject has been regarded in many different lights, and has to a great extent been made a subject of controversy. And in the controversy, all the objections which human ingenuity has been able to invent, have been arrayed against the Scripture doctrine. And some of those who have in a general manner embraced it, and have made use of it for important practical purposes, have indulged themselves in unscriptural and unwarrantable speculations, and in this way have filled the minds of many, both among the unlearned and the learned, with perplexity and doubt. So that, although the doctrine of atonement is, by a great number of ministers and private Christians, apprehended and embraced in its true Scripture sense; and although it has often been triumphantly defended; and although it is, both in

Digitized by Google

Christian and pagan countries, producing the same happy and glorious effects as it produced in the apostolic age; still the public mind is extensively in such a state, as renders it necessary for ministers of Christ to give exact explanations of the subject, to present clear, definite, intelligible views of it, and to treat it in such a manner, that all sober, candid men may understand it alike, and may in a higher degree than heretofore, experience the effect of truth unmingled with error.

It is therefore my purpose, in the further consideration of the subject, to attend carefully to those inquiries which naturally arise in the minds of thinking men at the present day; to give necessary explanations of terms and phrases, and to guard as effectually as possible against mistakes and difficulties. My object is not so much to trace out and confute particular forms of error, as to point out its sources, and the means of its confutation.

I shall at present inquire, how far the language of Scripture and of common religious discourse in relation to the subject under consideration, is metaphorical; what the real import of this language is; what mistakes arise from not understanding this import; and how far it is desirable and necessary that metaphorical terms and phrases should be retained.

It is obvious that a great part of our language relative to moral and spiritual subjects was originally metaphorical. Words were taken from sensible objects and applied to things intellectual or spiritual. The ground of this application is always some real or apprehended resemblance of these moral or spiritual objects to those which are sensible. When David says "The Lord is my shepherd," no man could understand his meaning, if there were not some obvious resemblance between God and a shepherd. But if we know what a shepherd was, and consider that David had been a shepherd; then, as soon as we read this declaration of his; "The Lord is my shepherd," we are struck with the care and kindness and vigilance of a shepherd in regard to his sheep, and the protection he affords them, and understand David as signifying that, in these respects, God resembles a shepherd.

Digitized by Google

The analogy implied in metaphors often relates to the effects produced. God says, "I will be as dew unto Israel." Dew gives refreshment to the earth and promotes the growth of vegetables. The metaphor implies that the effects of God's agency in the spiritual world have a resemblance to these effects of dew upon the earth, that God gives refreshment and consolation to the souls of his people, and causes them to abound in holy affections and works. But it is of special consequence to settle it in our minds, that the kind and degree of analogy must always be determined from the nature of the subjects and the obvious circumstances of the case. Metaphorical language is addressed to those who possess common sense, and who are supposed to be so well acquainted with the subject to which the metaphor is applied, and with that from which it is borrowed, that they cannot well mistake its meaning.

Let us here notice some of the metaphors which the Scriptures apply to God, as a Moral Governor. We are sometimes accused of representing God as an angry, wrathful, revengeful being. But does not this accusation lie equally against the inspired volume? Just consider how the subject is treated there. Deut. 29: 20; "The Lord will not spare him," that is, the obstinate sinner, "but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man," etc. Deut. 32: 21, 22; "They have provoked me to anger. A fire is kindled in mine anger, that shall burn to the lowest hell." Ps. 7: 11; "God is angry with the wicked every day." Ps. 78: 49; "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation." Such representations as these, which abound in the Old Testament, are also made by the writers of the New. They often speak of God's anger, wrath, fiery indignation, and vengeance; and they speak too of Christ's taking vengeance. They speak of "the wrath of the Lamb." Now do any of those writers, against whom the allegation above mentioned is urged, exceed the holy Scriptures in the dreadfulness of the representations they make of the divine anger? Do they say what is stronger than this, that God is angry with sinners every day, that his anger and jealousy will

Digitized by Google

smoke against them, that the fire of his anger will burn to the lowest hell? Do they speak of anything more terrific, than the fierceness of God's anger, wrath, and indignation? Do they rise above the spirit of the New Testament, which proclaims the boundless love of God, and exhibits the mild attractions of redeeming mercy, but which, at the same time, declares that the wrath of God abideth on unbelievers, and that the Saviour himself will render to them indignation and wrath, and which takes special care to teach us that he claims vengeance to himself as one of his high prerogatives? Do any of the writers, who are complained of for giving unamiable, repulsive, and terrific views of God, go beyond these representations, which so abound in every part of Scripture?

But it is said, the inspired writers use the language above quoted in a *metaphorical* sense. This is true. And have not the writers and preachers who imitate them, the same vindication? What conception must that man have of revelation, who condemns us for using the very same metaphors which the prophets and apostles used, and for the very same purpose? With prophets and apostles, this metaphorical language was the language of strong emotion, and they used it to excite emotion in the minds of others. I say the same in regard to those who imitate them. And I say also, that to exclude all this metaphorical language from religious discourse, and to confine ourselves to that which is to be understood in the literal sense, and which is logically exact, would be not only to dissent from the sacred writers, but to deprive ourselves of the best means of impressing truth upon the minds of men. It is impossible for us to utter vivid conceptions of God's displeasure against sin, or to excite vivid conceptions in the minds of others, without the use of metaphors. And who will say that better metaphors could be chosen, than those which are so freely used by men divinely inspired?

I have made these observations to show, that no one has any right to condemn us for using such metaphorical language as we find in the sacred volume in relation to the present subject, and indeed that we cannot avoid the use of it, without manifest disrespect to the word of God.

Digitized by Google

The meaning of the metaphorical language which I have cited, and the propriety of using it, can be very easily shown. An angry, revengeful man is inclined to inflict evil upon those against whom his anger is directed. And the more violent his anger, the more dreadful the evil he wishes to inflict. When, therefore, the inspired writers would set forth the evils which a righteous God will inflict upon the wicked, they represent him as angry and full of revenge; and to make it appear, that the evils he will inflict as the just punishment of sin, are unavoidable and dreadful, they represent him as having the fierceness of anger, anger that smokes and burns, and that will not cease before it has destroyed those who are its objects. Here the analogy implied in the metaphor does not relate to the nature of the feeling or motive, which prompts to the infliction of evil. In this respect God has no resemblance to an angry, revengeful man. For a revengeful man is *malevolent* and *wicked;* but God is *benevolent* and *holy*. Nor is any analogy intended as to the particular kind of evil to be endured, or the manner in which it is to be inflicted. But as to the certainty, as to the greatness, as to the dreadfulness of the evil which is to come upon the wicked, and God's determination to inflict it, there is a striking analogy. And this is the analogy which naturally occurs to common sense and an awakened conscience. Let the minds of men be free from wrong bias, and their moral faculties awake, and then let it be represented to them, that God is angry with the wicked, that his wrath burns against them, and that he will take vengeance upon them; and the impression they will receive will be an impression of God's holy displeasure against sin, and of the just and dreadful destruction which will come upon the impenitent. The impression will be conformable to truth. The language is indeed metaphorical, but it is perfectly just and right, and perfectly adapted to convey to the minds of men the very conception which is intended to be conveyed, of the justice and holiness of God, and the fearful consequences of sin. In what other way can you make an impression so deep and salutary? How can you influence those who are creatures of feeling, without exciting feeling? And

Digitized by Google

how can you excite feeling, without using the language of feeling?

But to proceed. If the displeasure of God against sin, and his determination to inflict a just punishment, is represented under the image of anger and revenge that will not be satisfied till it has compassed its end; then God's withholding the punishment due to offenders, or forgiving them, may be represented as ceasing to be angry, as restraining the fierceness of his anger, etc. And if anything operates as a means of preventing the effects of the divine displeasure and procuring divine forgiveness, it may properly be spoken of as a means of turning away God's anger, of quenching his wrath, etc. This mode of representing the subject is sanctioned not only by the authority of the inspired writers, but by the common practice of men, when they speak and write without shackles.

It is, however, to be remembered, that the metaphorical language above mentioned is, as I have said, the language of emotion, and is ordinarily to be used for the purpose of impression. To calm reasoning, or to plain, didactic discourse, it is not specially adapted. But in sacred poetry, in fervent prayer, and in all religious discourse which is intended to rouse a sleeping conscience or to move the passions, nothing can be more suitable. To object against it betrays a perverted judgment and taste, or apathy of moral feeling.

If you would pursue this subject further, and inquire what it is in God which produces effects resembling the effects of human anger and revenge, in other words, what it is in God which leads him to inflict punishment on sinners, the inquiry may be answered in a variety of ways. I may say, it is God's infinite *holiness*. If he is holy himself, he must be pleased with holiness in us. And if he is pleased with holiness, he must be displeased with the contrary, which is sin. And if he is displeased with sin, he must, to be consistent, express his displeasure. But he cannot express his displeasure, without doing what is contrary to that which shows that he is pleased; that is, without the infliction of evil. It thus plainly results from the holiness of God, that he must inflict evil upon the unholy and disobedient.

Digitized by Google

Or I may say, it is the *justice* of God that leads him to inflict evil upon sinners. Those who transgress the moral law, which is holy, just, and good, have a personal demerit. They deserve to suffer punishment. As God is a just Ruler, he will be disposed to inflict punishment, and to do it in such a manner and in such a degree, as the honor of his law and the ill desert of trangressors shall require.

Or I may say, it is God's *benevolence* that leads him to punish sinners. Certain it is, that the benevolence of God, who is the Former and the supreme Head of a moral empire, must lead him to desire and to promote its order and happiness. Benevolence is wishing well to others. Benevolence in God is his wishing well to his intelligent universe. And as he wishes well to the universe, he must maintain a moral government. He must make and publish laws, and must encourage obedience by rewards, and discourage disobedience by punishments. There is no other conceivable way of promoting the welfare of intelligent, moral beings. I say then, if so great and hurtful an evil as sin occurs in God's moral kingdom, a benevolent regard to the happiness of that kingdom must lead him to frown upon it, and by suitable punishments to discountenance it.

You see it comes in reality to the same thing, whether we consider the punishment of sinners as resulting from the holiness, the justice, or the benevolence of God. It is his infinite perfection, it is the consummate excellence of his character as moral Governor, which leads him to punish those who transgress his laws. And as transgression is an evil so hateful in itself, and in its tendency so ruinous to the welfare of moral beings, it is obvious that a just and benevolent God must manifest his justice and benevolence by a severe and dreadful punishment of transgressors.

It appears then, that what is familiarly called God's anger, his wrath, his fierce wrath, the fire of his wrath, his vengeance, etc., is so far from implying anything faulty or unamiable in his character, that it directly results from his supreme excellence. Should he cease to feel disapprobation of sin, or displeasure against it, or should he cease to show his displeasure by inflicting evils adequate

Digitized by Google

to the ill-desert of sinners, and expressive of his righteous opposition against sin, he would cease to be a God of holiness, he would cease to be a God of justice, and he would cease to be a God of benevolence.

What then becomes of the objection, so frequently and so warmly urged by Unitarians against the common methods of representing the atonement, and the effects produced by it? It is said we give the most repulsive and unamiable views of the character of God; that our doctrine represents him as wanting in goodness, as the subject of violent and wrathful passion, which could be appeased in no other way than by the blood of his own Son; as a selfish being whose favor cannot be enjoyed without being purchased, and that too at a dear rate. It is said that our doctrine takes away the freeness of divine mercy, and that by clothing God with the attributes of a tyrant, it excludes the possibility of our loving him; and that if our doctrine were true, we should feel ourselves chained to a miserable existence, under the government of a God omnipotent only in malevolence and wrath. This is the substance of the objection which has been reiterated against the commonly received doctrine of the atonement. To these objections, which are so much relied upon by Unitarians, and which are made so prominent and so plausible in their writings, I think it easy to reply.

I ask then, whether our representations of the wrath of God against sin, of his determination to punish sinners, and of his requiring so much to be done by Christ in order to their forgiveness, go beyond the representations of Scripture? Is not the language of God's word as plain and as strong as ours? Is not the description it gives of his feelings, and his administration towards sinners, as terrific as ours? And I ask too, whether our representations in regard to this subject are *variant* from the standard of God's word? Do we present views in any way different from those of the sacred writers? Every candid man who examines the subject thoroughly, must see that our language does not rise above the language of the Bible, and does not materially differ from it in one way or another. The only defence

Digitized by Google

of the general objection which can be of any avail is, that the language of Scripture is figurative. This is granted. And if it was proper for those who wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to set forth the divine character and administration in figurative language, why is it not equally proper for us? Why should complaints be brought against us for copying after that book which is acknowledged to be an infallible standard? It may be pretended that the metaphorical language above mentioned, when used by us, conveys a different sense from what it conveyed when used by the inspired writers. But what evidence is there of the fact? When *we* say in the language of Scripture, that God is angry with the wicked, that his wrath abideth on them and will consume them, what reason is there to think that we are not understood to mean the same thing as the sacred writers meant? The most respectable authors among the orthodox have taken pains to explain clearly the figurative language in common use on this subject, and have taught that, when applied to God, it must not be understood to attribute to him any of the faults or imperfections of man; that the wrath of God is a holy wrath, and his vengeance holy vengeance, perfectly consistent with infinite righteousness and benevolence, and flowing from them. The same is true of other figurative language, which is common to orthodox Christians and to the sacred writers.

But I must ask further, whether it is in truth a fault in the character of God, as the writings of our opponents imply, that he is so highly displeased with sinners, and that he has so deep and utter an abhorrence of all sin. Is sin indeed so small an evil as to deserve little or no divine wrath? When God's anger burns against sinners and inflicts heavy punishments upon them, when it burns long and inflicts everlasting punishment upon them, does it rise above what is just? Does it go beyond the desert of sin? Our opponents think that it does; and this, I apprehend, is at the bottom of all their difficulties respecting the language under consideration. For if they only had a suitable sense of the evil of sin, they would no longer think that any degree of divine displeasure against it could be too great. If they were only brought

Digitized by Google

to see and feel how holy God's law is, and how righteous its penalty, and how criminal and inexcusable sinners are, and how great their guilt, they would no longer deem it cruelty or unjust severity for God to punish them, according to his word, with everlasting destruction. Here we find the hinge on which the controversy chiefly turns. If we entertain low conceptions of the guilt of transgressors, as we are all prone to do, because we ourselves are the transgressors, and nothing is more natural for us than to think lightly of our own misconduct; if we entertain these low conceptions of the evil of sin, and of the ill desert of transgressors; when God comes forth in his word, and in the language of terror declares his wrath against them, and when he comes forth in his holy government, and actually shows his wrath, and utterly destroys them, we shall feel in our hearts the sentiment which our opponents are sometimes bold enough to express, that such a God is a tyrant, and that his government is a system of cruelty and horror.

I have one more remark. In urging the objection above stated, Unitarians say, that we divest God of the attribute of infinite goodness, and of the glory of exercising free mercy, by asserting that he refuses to forgive his erring children, unless he is first rendered propitious, and his mercy purchased by the blood of his own Son. Now, without stopping to show the utter injustice and the shocking impiety of such a representation, I would merely ask, is it really so, that God shows less benevolence in proportion as he takes more pains to bestow favors? If the law of God and its penalty have any meaning, then our transgressing the law presents an obstacle, a real and mighty obstacle, to the bestowment of divine favors upon us. Now when God turns aside from the common course of his administration, and, instead of inflicting merited punishment upon us, adopts the most extraordinary method to remove the obstacle which our wickedness had thrown in the way of our happiness, and thus secures our eternal life; is this unparalleled effort of benevolence to be turned to the discredit of benevolence? Is it come to this, that we are to consider the mercy of God less free, less abundant, and less glorious,

Digitized by Google

in proportion to the greatness of the work which it accomplishes to bring salvation to our door? Such appears to me to be the real, naked sentiment of those who object to the doctrine of the atonement by the death of Christ, as diminishing and sullying the free goodness and grace of God. No words can express my astonishment, that any one who enjoys the light of the gospel should entertain a sentiment so dishonorable to God, and so totally contrary to his word. It is one of the plainest representations of Scripture, that the benevolence of God is the most highly honored, and glorified, not by granting pardon and salvation directly and absolutely, in the way of mere sovereignty, but by providing an atonement, that is, by sending his Son to die for our sins. "God *so loved* the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." "*Herein* is love, that God gave his Son to die for us." "God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If any *human* friend should interpose, and, to deliver us from extreme danger and suffering should put forth an effort of love a thousandth part as great and wonderful as this, we should think he ought to be loved and honored for ever.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXVII.

THE NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT ARGUED FROM VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS.

THE question, whether an atonement was necessary, has been treated in a great variety of ways by those who have received the general doctrine of Christ's death. My design is not to pursue the question through the labyrinth of abstruse and doubtful investigation, but to give, in the simplest manner possible, the reasons which satisfy my own mind of the necessity of an atonement by the death of Christ.

When we ask, whether an atonement by the death of Christ was *necessary*, our inquiry is not, whether in the literal sense, God had *power* to forgive and save sinners without the death of Christ, if it had seemed good in his sight; but whether he could do it *consistently with his moral attributes, and with the essential principles of his administration;* in other words, whether an atonement was necessary in order that sinners might be pardoned and saved consistently with the divine perfections and the divine law.

My *first argument* in proof of the necessity of an atonement flows from the fact, that through the appointment of God, *an atonement has actually been made.* Jesus died that we might be saved. He was made a curse for us, that we might be delivered from the curse. Now it must be acknowledged that God always acts wisely; that whenever he adopts any measure in his government, he has good reason for it. We cannot doubt this in regard

Digitized by Google

to anything he does, whether it be of greater or less consequence. In all his operations, he has wise and holy ends in view; and who can suppose that he ever acts, except for the accomplishment of those ends? How unable soever we may be, in particular cases, to understand the reasons of what God does, we can never doubt that he *has* reasons. The wisest of all beings can never act without wisdom. And as we must believe that God had reasons in his own mind for all that he does, we must believe this especially in regard to the higher and more conspicuous acts of his government. When we consider the whole creation, and the form of it, as necessary, in one way or another, to the perfect accomplishment of the ends which God sought, then in the whole work of creation he seems to have acted in a manner most worthy of his infinite wisdom and love. With the views which we entertain of God, we cannot doubt that he had important reasons for such a work, and that he regarded it as necessary to the accomplishment of his benevolent desires.

But if we may generally infer from the fact of God's performing any work, that he had good reasons for it, and that he regarded it as necessary to the accomplishment of his object; we may with special propriety make the inference in the case under consideration. In other cases of divine operation there is ordinarily nothing in the work itself, which can be considered as disagreeable to the mind of God — nothing to which we can suppose him to feel any reluctance. For example, we can see no reason why God should in any respect feel a reluctance to create a world, or to put forth any exertion of his power, which does not involve the infliction of pain or the destruction of happiness. But it is impossible for us to conceive, that a God of perfect benevolence should take pleasure in the misery of any intelligent beings, *in itself considered.* He assures us that he has no pleasure in the death even of sinners, ill deserving as they are. We cannot but conceive, that God feels a reluctance to inflict pain which would always prevent him from doing it, had he not important ends in view which require such infliction. A God of infinite benevolence and compassion could not have taken pleasure in the

Digitized by Google

destruction of the world by a deluge, or of Sodom by fire, considered in itself; and he never would have caused such suffering among his creatures, had not their sins rendered it necessary. So we say of a righteous and benevolent judge, that he never would pronounce sentence of death against any man, were it not necessary to the cause of justice and to the order of the community. And most surely a judge would never consent that his own son should be given over to a disgraceful death, unless he was convinced that reasons of great weight imperiously demanded it.

But there is no case, in which one can be supposed to feel so strong a reluctance to inflict suffering on another, as God must have felt to inflict suffering on Christ. For God is immeasurably more benevolent, than any other being, and must therefore feel a stronger desire for the complete happiness of every individual, and a stronger aversion to the infliction of pain. But as his only begotten Son is infinitely dearer to him than any other being in the universe, he must have felt a stronger reluctance to inflict evil upon him, than upon any other. And it is far less unreasonable to say, that God destroyed Sodom by fire, and the world by water, without any necessity, and that all the ends of moral government could have been secured without the infliction of such evil as well as with it, than to say, that the death of Christ was unnecessary, and that sinners could have been saved without it as well as with it. It must be highly dishonorable to him to suppose, that he would put his dearly beloved Son to grief, and overwhelm him with suffering, had there not been an absolute necessity for it in order to the accomplishment of the momentous ends which his benevolence sought. Had not these ends created a necessity and a very strong necessity for the sufferings of Christ, we cannot but think that God would have been infinitely distant from inflicting them, and would have exerted his omnipotence to prevent them. I argue here from the mere fact, that Christ, according to the appointment of God, did suffer and die to make an atonement for sin. And I am bold to say, that if all intelligent beings in the universe had been acquainted with the character of Christ, and

Digitized by Google

the perfect love which God felt towards him, and then, without any farther information, had been spectators of the sufferings which Christ endured for the salvation of men, there could have been but one sentiment among them, and that sentiment must have been, that there was some mighty reason, some most urgent necessity for such sufferings, or God would never have brought them upon the head of his beloved Son. So Dr. Wardlaw; "If he whose wisdom is infinite has, in point of fact, adopted the plan of atonement, who will tell him that he might have done otherwise? Who will presume to affirm, that God has been expending his wisdom in a useless device, and executing a scheme of stupendous magnificence, which might all have been spared?"

My *second argument will be derived from passages of Scripture, which imply that there was a necessity for the sufferings of Christ.* Matt. 26: 54. Jesus signified to Peter, in reference to those who came with the traitor to apprehend him, that if he chose, he could speedily have legions of angels to protect him from their violence. But he added as a reason for not doing this; "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus *it must be?*" or as it might more properly be translated, that it is necessary so to be; [*οὕτω δεῖ γενέσθαι.*] So in Mark 8: 31; "He began to teach them that the Son of man *must* suffer many things," *ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν;* that it was *necessary* the Son of man should suffer many things. Luke 24: 7: "The Son of man *must* be delivered into the hands of sinful men;" it is *necessary* that he should be delivered. Do any suppose, that this necessity was created by the fact that the sufferings of Christ were predicted or predetermined? But if there had been no necessity for those sufferings in order to the salvation of sinners, why did God predetermine them? And why did he predict them? Besides it is signified in the passages which speak of the fulfilment of these predictions, that the Scriptures did not merely foretell the fact that Jesus should suffer, but that they represent it to be necessary. This necessity is brought directly to view, John 3: 14; "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,

Digitized by Google

so must the Son of man be lifted up (*οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱόν*) — even so it is *necessary* the Son of man should be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." It was necessary for this purpose, that those who believe on him might be saved. The salvation of men, even of believers, depended on Christ's death. This necessity is most strikingly indicated by the prayer of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. Overwhelmed with sorrow in the prospect of his approachiug death on the cross, he repeatedly offered up this earnest prayer; — "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The second time, he prayed and said, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, — *εἰ οὐ δύναται* if it *cannot* pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Now we cannot admit the thought, that the Father was indifferent to the sufferings of his beloved Son, much less that he took pleasure in them, or inflicted them needlessly. The prayer of Christ, with what follows, clearly implies that it was not possible that the cup should pass away from him; that there was *a necessity* for his death. It is evident from the very terms of his prayer, that Christ himself apprehended such a necessity. Indeed it was on the ground of this necessity that he submitted to drink the cup. "If it be possible, let it pass from me." But if it be not possible that it should pass from me, that is, if there is a necessity that I should drink it, "thy will be done." What this necessity was, we might satisfactorily infer from the fact that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This was his great object. When therefore it appears, that in the view of his Father who sent him, and in his own view, it was not possible for him to be freed from the sufferings of Calvary, in other words, that it was absolutely necessary that he should die on the cross, the natural conclusion is, that it was thus necessary in order to the accomplishment of his great object, namely, the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Storr, referring to the prayer in the garden, says; "It would have been altogether inconsistent with the character of the only wise God to expose his Son to such sufferings, if the object for which he died could possibly have been otherwise obtained."

Digitized by Google

Having thus argued the necessity of an atonement from the fact that an atonement has been made, and from several texts of Scripture which clearly imply that there was such a necessity, I shall now argue it,

Thirdly, from the consideration of the divine attributes, and the well-known principles of the divine government. I am sensible that if we should pursue this argument without special caution, we should be exposed to the danger of presumptuous reasoning and unwarrantable conclusions. Still I think the argument may be so conducted, as to be entirely satisfactory. For although we cannot, without definite information from God's word or providence, safely conclude in what precise manner any one of his attributes will develop itself, or how the general principles of his government will operate in regard to particular cases in future time; yet surely we may reason with safety on these subjects in reference to cases which have already occurred, and concerning which the Scriptures give particular instruction. For example, it would have been impossible for any man, living before the deluge was predicted, to know that the wisdom or justice of God, or any principle of his government, would require the destruction of the world by a universal deluge. But with the history of that dreadful event before us in the sacred volume, and with the instruction which we there have as to the causes and circumstances of it, and the ends which were to be accomplished by it, we have no difficulty in adopting the conclusion, that the justice and the wisdom of God required that the wicked world should be visited with such a tremendous judgment, and that God saw such a signal punishment to be necessary to support the principles and secure the ends of his moral government.

But in regard to the atonement by the death of Christ, we have more clear and certain principles on which to rest our conclusion, than in any other case within our knowledge. For, in the first place, we know the character of God, — that he possesses infinite holiness and justice, wisdom and benevolence, and that he exercises these attributes as Governor of the world. And as God is holy and just, he will manifest his holiness and justice in his ad-

Digitized by Google

ministration. And how can he do this, except by executing the penalty of the law in the punishment of sinners. His wisdom must evidently lead to this, because, if sin exists, we can conceive of no other way in which its evil consequences can be prevented, and the order and happiness of his kingdom secured, — no other fit means of accomplishing the most desirable ends. His benevolence must require a manifestation of his displeasure against whatever would tend to injure his moral kingdom. And how can he show his displeasure, but by withholding good, or inflicting evil? The bestowment of happiness is an expression of love and approbation. Disapprobation and displeasure cannot be shown in this way. If sin exists, it is from the very nature of things impossible that God should manifest the feelings of his mind respecting it, except by the infliction of suffering.

This view of the attributes of God, and of their operation in a moral government, agrees perfectly with the teachings of his word. He has given us plain, definite commands, and has encouraged us to obedience by the promise of a reward, and for disobedience has threatened punishment. This law expresses the mind of God in regard to our conduct, and develops the principles of his moral government. If you ask then why God has annexed such a penalty to his law, and why he will inflict such punishment upon transgressors, I answer, because he has a benevolent regard to the interests of his kingdom, and must frown upon whatever aims to injure those interests; because he is holy, and must feel a hatred to that which is contrary to his holiness; because he is just, and must be disposed to punish those who disobey, according to the degree of their criminality; and because he is wise, and in the exercise of his wisdom must adopt the most suitable means of promoting the welfare of his kingdom; and if sin occurs, must vindicate his character, and guard against the evil consequences of sin, by the only means adapted to that purpose, that is, by a righteous punishment.

We see then what is the design of the penalty of the law, and, by seeing what is the design of that penalty, we see what is the necessity of its being executed. In the direct and regular ad-

Digitized by Google

ministration of God's moral government, there is the same necessity of his executing the penalty of the law, as there is of his acting according to his own perfections and accomplishing the great end of his government. The punishment of sinners is necessary, just as it is necessary that God should exercise his own infinite wisdom, and justice, and goodness. It is necessary, just as it is necessary that God should promote order and happiness in his moral kingdom. In other words, it is necessary, just as it is necessary that God should be a good moral Governor.

On the same grounds, we prove the necessity of an atonement in order to the forgiveness of sin. If the punishment of sin is remitted, and nothing comes in the place of it answering the same ends, then it is evident God ceases to act according to his own infinite perfections. He ceases to be a good moral governor. He ceases to pursue the order and happiness of his kingdom. He gives no adequate testimony of his displeasure against sin, and suffers that which threatens ruin to his subjects, to pass without any effectual check. Supposing then that sin is not followed with punishment according to the penalty of the law, how can God's character as a moral Governor appear in an honorable light, and the highest interests of his kingdom be secured, unless he substitutes something in the place of the punishment of sinners, which shall compass the same ends; something which shall equally manifest his holiness and justice, and his regard to the happiness of his kingdom; something which shall as clearly show the evil of sin, and be as effectual a safeguard against its prevalence. I say not now what this substitute must be; but I say, if something does not come in the place of the threatened punishment, which shall equally answer the good ends of punishment, the remission of sin will occasion real injury to God's moral kingdom. This is perfectly plain. If the punishment of sin is a fit and effectual means of promoting the welfare of God's kingdom, and of exhibiting his character in an honorable light, and if this punishment is withheld, and nothing else take the place of it, then all the good which would have been secured to moral beings by the punishment of sin, is lost, and the glory of God's holiness, justice, and

Digitized by Google

goodness as moral Governor, which would have been displayed by executing the penalty of the law, is obscured.

But what is that which, by divine appointment, is substituted for the punishment of sinners, and which secures the same important ends? According to the opinion of some, it is the repentance of sinners. But does repentance answer the same ends? Is it adapted to answer them? Does the fact that sinners repent, show God's holiness and justice, as their punishment shows it? Does it make God's hatred of sin equally apparent? Is it an equally powerful check to the commission of sin? Is it an equally effectual means of promoting obedience and happiness among intelligent beings? If so, then it would be perfectly safe and proper, and what eternal truth would seem to dictate, that every divine law, and every human law too, should go forth with precisely this enforcement, — *that the transgressor must either repent*, or *suffer punishment*. It would be wrong to omit either one part or the other of this alternative. It would be just as proper for the law to say merely, the soul that sinneth shall *repent*, as to say merely, the soul that sinneth shall *die*. Neither the one nor the other would, on this supposition, do full justice to the meaning of the Lawgiver, or to the nature of the case. To be consistent with truth, the law *must* stand thus, — *the soul that sinneth shall either repent or die*. Thus too the most important laws of civil society ought to stand. The man who commits murder must repent, or die. The thief, the highwayman, must repent, or suffer imprisonment. For who can show any reason why repentance may not answer the ends of punishment in civil society, as well as under the moral government of God?

It is indeed evident from Scripture, that repentance does secure forgiveness. But it is equally evident, that the efficacy of repentance to procure forgiveness, as well as the offer of forgiveness on the condition of repentance, is owing altogether to the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. This is the ground of every proposal which is made, and of every measure which is adopted, in reference to the salvation of sinners. Repentance would not have been enjoined nor forgiveness proffered, except in virtue of the atonement of Christ.

Digitized by Google

The question then returns, what is that which by divine appointment, is substituted for the punishment of sinners, and which answers the same important ends? The true Scripture answer is, the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. He redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. And a careful examination of the subject and of the representations of Scripture respecting it, will clearly show, that the sufferings of Christ did in fact secure the same ends, as would have been secured by the punishment of sinners. The death of Christ, as an expiatory sacrifice, made known the ill desert of sin and God's hatred of it, — it showed that God is a God of holiness and justice and goodness, — it manifested his high regard to the principles of a moral government, and to the permanent order and happiness of intelligent beings. And I am sure that Christ's sufferings for our sins, connected with his perfect holiness and the love which the Father had for him, must make an appeal to the moral sensibilities of men, which will be, to say the least, as powerful a check to the commission of sin, as the infliction of deserved punishment on transgressors themselves could have been.

We see then that Christ's death was appointed by God as a substitute for the punishment of sinners; that it answered the same purposes; that it made substantially the same display of God's attributes and the principles of his government, and has the same efficacy, though far superior in degree, to promote the permanent welfare of his kingdom. Now on supposition that sinners are to be exempted from merited punishment, there was evidently the same necessity for an atonement by the death of Christ, as there would have been, without that atonement, for the punishment of sinners. If you know what necessity there originally was for annexing a penalty to the law, and for inflicting punishment upon transgressors, you know what necessity there was for the vicarious sufferings of Christ, on supposition that sinners were to be forgiven. The ends, for which a penalty was annexed to the law, are vastly important, and must be accomplished in one way or another. If they are not accomplished according to the provisions of the law, by the merited sufferings

Digitized by Google

of transgressors, there is an obvious necessity that they should be accomplished in another way; that is, according to the provisions of divine grace, by the substituted sufferings of a Redeemer. Should not these ends be accomplished either by the punishment of sinners, or by the death of a substitute, the support of moral government would be taken away, sin would be licensed, and disorder and misery would reign.

My reasoning, you perceive, rests on those attributes of God and those principles of moral government, which are made known by Scripture, and by the common course of Divine Providence. The whole may be summed up in a few words. God being what he is, a holy, just, and benevolent Governor; his subjects being what they are, rational and moral agents; and the settled principles of his administration being what they are; there is an obvious necessity that punishment should be inflicted on sinners according to the tenor of the law, or, if not, that their Redeemer, as a vicarious sufferer, should endure that which will answer the same ends as would have been answered by the punishment of sinners. This necessity cannot be denied, without denying that God possesses such attributes, or that he has established such a government over moral beings, or that moral beings are possessed of such a nature and are influenced in such a manner, as the Scriptures show. When therefore we assert that an atonement was absolutely necessary in order to the forgiveness of sin, and that God could not forgive sin without it, we assert that which is in the highest degree honorable to God. For it is the same as to say, that God is so good a being that he cannot but show his displeasure against so destructive an evil as sin, and cannot but seek the welfare of his intelligent offspring. If we had lower conceptions of the holiness and justice and universal benevolence of God as Governor of the world, we might think he could very easily and safely pardon sin without taking such pains to prepare the way for pardon and to guard against the evils which might otherwise flow from it to his moral kingdom. Or if we had lower conceptions of the criminality and hurtful tendency of sin, we might think there was no necessity for such a public testimony

Digitized by Google

against it by the death of a Mediator. And it is in my view a matter of fact, that those who deny the necessity of an atonement, do entertain low conceptions of the attributes of God, particularly of his holiness and justice — and of his benevolence too as related to the welfare of his vast moral empire. They make much of God's compassion and kindness to sinners, considered in their private, individual capacity, and think he need not and cannot be so severe, as to doom them to hopeless misery. But they overlook the benevolent regard which he has to the permanent order and happiness of his universal kingdom. They view God in the light of a judge who feels more for a criminal at the bar, than for the whole community, and who cannot be so severe as to pronounce a sentence of death upon the guilty individual, though such sentence is required by a wise and necessary law. Those who reject the atonement are, I think, chargeable with a palpable disregard of the most glorious perfections of God, with underrating the evil of sin, and with a manifest indifference to the honor of God's holy law and the welfare of his kingdom. And it is perfectly plain, that while they retain such low conceptions on these subjects, no reasoning whatever is likely to have any effect upon them. The only remedy for their error in regard to the atonement is, that through the operation of the Holy Spirit, they should be brought to entertain Scriptural views of God, of his law, and of the evil of sin. Let them be brought to this, and they will at once see and feel, that without atoning blood there could be no remission. Their error is at bottom a practical one, and it ought to be treated accordingly.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXVIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF SUBSTITUTION OR VICARIOUS SUFFERINGS MORE PARTICULARLY CONSIDERED.

I HAVE frequently spoken of Christ as suffering in our stead, and of his sufferings as vicarious. These and other phrases of the same import have been familiarly employed by the most learned and pious divines in Christendom, for the simple purpose of expressing, in a convenient form, what they have understood the Scriptures to teach as to the sufferings of the Redeemer. These phrases are still in familiar use. They are interwoven with the religious discourse and associated with the devout feelings of intelligent Christians. And they will in all probability continue to be employed much as they have been. And why should they not? There are no forms of speech which seem better suited to express the very fact which the Scriptures plainly set forth.

It is not my present design to give a particular and full answer to the objections urged against the forms of speech above mentioned. I propose, however, to show that the same objections lie against the doctrine of the Scriptures, and against the language by which the Scriptures teach the doctrine. It is said by those who object to the common phraseology, that if Christ took the place of sinners and suffered in their stead, neither law nor justice could demand more of them. And how could the wrath of God abide on them, as it does even on the elect before they believe, after

Digitized by Google

Christ had endured the curse of the law as their substitute? Now just take the expression of Scripture, "that Christ died for our sins,"—"that he suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." The objector may say, if Christ has died for our sins, how can *we* also be exposed to die for them? After our Redeemer has suffered for us, how could it be just in God still to punish us for our sins, and that as severely as though Christ had never suffered? Does not this imply either that all which Christ suffered for our sins stands for nothing, or that God considers it right to require a double punishment for the same sins, first of Christ, and then of us?

The objection, you see, is as plausible against the language of Scripture, as against the phrases above mentioned. And it is so for a very plain reason, namely, that these phrases and the language of Scripture evidently mean the same thing. This is the answer I give to those who profess to hold the Scripture doctrine of atonement, and yet object to the common method of designating the sufferings of Christ, as substituted, or vicarious.

But it is to be remembered that substitution never implies, that the thing substituted is exactly like that for which it is substituted. The contrary is generally implied, that is, one thing is substituted in place of another, *because it is different, and is therefore preferred.* For example, a man lays aside strong drink, and substitutes water in its place. A bank note is a substitute for silver and gold.

But if substitution does not imply that the thing substituted has an exact likeness to that for which it is substituted, what does it imply? It implies, that *it answers, or is intended to answer the same or a similar purpose.* It comes in the place of the other, as to its use, or end. Water gives refreshment better than strong drink, and is therefore substituted for it. A bank note is a substitute for silver and gold, because in pecuniary transactions it answers the same purpose, although in respect to the other uses of silver and gold it cannot be a substitute. It is true generally, that one thing is spoken of as a substitute for another not in all respects, but only in the particular respect intended. The design

Digitized by Google

of substitution, and its necessary limitations, must in every instance be determined from Scripture and from the obvious nature and circumstances of the case.

The substitution in the case before us relates to the ends of punishment in God's moral administration. If Christ's sufferings answered the same ends, as would have been answered by our enduring the sufferings which are deserved, his sufferings are in that respect vicarious. The language is here used in the same manner as it is commonly used in reference to other subjects. So that if it is liable to objections when used in relation to the doctrine of atonement, it is equally so when used in relation to all other subjects. The mistake in this, as in other instances, has arisen from pressing the meaning of language beyond due limits, and carrying it to an unreasonable extreme.

But the chief object I now have in view, is to show, that *unless Christ was our substitute, and his sufferings vicarious, his death could not have answered the ends intended.* Suppose then, the holy Saviour had died, not as our substitute, not in our place, but, so to speak, in his own place, or for himself. What display could his death have made of the moral perfections of God? How could it have shown his hatred of sin, or his justice in punishing it? And how could it have given support to his law? Let a perfectly holy angel be exhibited before intelligent, moral beings as an example of extraordinary suffering. How can this show God's hatred of sin — seeing the angel has no sin which God can hate, and for which he can inflict suffering? How can it show God's justice — seeing the angel has done nothing for which justice can inflict evil upon him? How can it support God's law — seeing it is an event directly in the face of that law — an instance of great suffering without any thing to deserve it, and where the law promised unmingled enjoyment? Would not the impression made by such an example of suffering, considered by itself, be dishonorable to the supreme Lawgiver, and to his Law? Would it not indicate, that he was displeased with holiness? Would it not imply that he was wanting in that principle of justice, which would lead him to treat his subjects according to their

Digitized by Google

character? Would it not detract from the influence of law, as it would evidently be a frown upon obedience? Such clearly would be the tendency of severe suffering in a holy angel. And such, but still more hazardous and dreadful, would be the tendency of suffering in the Son of God, standing by himself, and suffering on his own account. It would produce confusion and darkness and distress in the kingdom of God. It would subvert his moral government. Now what possible way is there, in which the sufferings of Christ could manifest the righteousness of God as a moral Governor, or give support to his law, or answer any good end whatever, except by his coming into a real and very near relation to sinners, and so occupying their place, that, in the eye of God and his kingdom, *his sufferings shall be instead of theirs?* His relation to sinners must be no fiction, no illusion, but a reality. As a sufferer, he must be substituted for them. And as to the ends to be answered by the penalty of the law, his sufferings must stand in the place of theirs; that is, *he must suffer and die for their sins, instead of their suffering for their own sins.* I say, there must be this substitution. Christ must stand in the place of sinners, and his sufferings must be vicarious, or they could not in any conceivable way answer the ends above mentioned. They could not manifest God's hatred of sin, for on that supposition his sufferings would not in any sense be on account of sin. They certainly would not be for his own sin; and they would not be for our sin, as that would be making his sufferings stand in the place of ours. There must be this substitution, or his sufferings could not manifest God's regard to his law, and his determination to support its authority. For in case of transgression, there is no conceivable way, in which God can manifest this regard to his law, but by the infliction of evil for the transgression. The direct way of doing this as pointed out by the law, is to inflict the merited evil upon transgressors themselves. If the penalty of the law is not executed upon them, and if no one comes in to endure it in their place, and on account of their transgression, then what does God do to show a regard to his law, or to support its authority? Nothing, but pardoning sin; that is,

Digitized by Google

nothing but *not executing the penalty*. Unless Christ's sufferings refer to this penalty, and come in the place of our merited punishment in such a manner that they shall truly be *for our sins*, they cannot in any way show God's regard to his violated law and his determination to support its authority. The law was violated by *us*. And any sufferings which can answer the purpose of supporting this law, thus violated, and preventing the evil consequences of our transgressions, must evidently be *either our own sufferings, or the sufferings of another in our place, and on our account*. Here we are brought back to the Scripture representation, that "Christ suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust." It is this *vicariousness* of the sufferings of Christ, which gives them their significancy and their efficacy. As his sufferings came in the place of the just sufferings of transgressors, they answered the same ends, making the same displays of the attributes of God, and giving the same support to his holy law.

Several speculative writers, who are counted on the side of orthodoxy, seem to have made it their business to show what the Scriptures *ought* to teach as to the atonement, not what they *do* teach. And some of these writers inquire, whether it would not be expedient to lay aside the use of those phrases which represent Christ as suffering in our stead, and whether other forms of speech might not be introduced, which would express what we intend more clearly. To this I reply, first, that there appears to be no language which so obviously and perfectly agrees with the true sense of the Scriptures, as that which represents Christ as our substitute, and his sufferings as vicarious. Secondly; suppose that this language has been misapprehended, and that it may in some instances occasion erroneous ideas; still I am confident that the best course to be pursued is, not to lay aside the language, but clearly to explain it, and to use it in a proper manner. And as the language is so well suited to the subject, this may easily be done. And in regard to such cases generally, it seems to me altogether expedient, and likely to promote the cause of Christ, to retain the words and phrases which are in good use, still doing all we can to disentangle them from false and ambiguous signifi-

Digitized by Google

cations, and to make them the medium of conveying the truth clearly and exactly to the minds of men.

Attempts have often been made to give a correct definition of the atonement. On this subject I shall offer a few brief remarks.

Every just definition, whether longer or shorter, must clearly express the principal properties belonging to the thing defined, especially those which distinguish it from all other things. That surely cannot be a just and adequate definition, which will apply to other things as well as the thing defined.

To atone for, in its common use, signifies *to make amends for an injury, or to give satisfaction for an offence.* But our present concern is with the word in the theological sense. What is the atonement which the gospel reveals, and which prepares the way for our salvation? Suppose it should be defined thus: the atonement is that which brings about a reconciliation between God and sinners, or that which prepares the way for our salvation. I do not regard these definitions as false or incorrect, but as *defective.* We could never learn from such definitions as these, whether the atonement which brings about the reconciliation, or prepares the way for our forgiveness, was made by ourselves, or by an angel, or by Christ; nor could we learn whether it was made by performing some useful action, or by enduring suffering, or by some other consideration. These definitions fail of giving a full and specific description of the thing intended. It is as though I should ask, what a thief, now in prison, owes to civil government; and instead of pointing out the exact punishment which the law threatens for stealing, you should say indefinitely, he owes that which will answer the demands of justice, and which, when paid, will restore him to the privileges of a citizen. Suppose then that any one should define the atonement to be that which displays the holiness and justice of God as moral Governor, and gives support and influence to his law. Such a definition as this, besides being too general, would want one of the essential qualities of a good definition, namely, a clear distinction between the thing defined and everything else. There are very many things which display

Digitized by Google

the holiness and justice of God, and give support to his law. The destruction of the world by a deluge, and of Sodom by fire, and of Jerusalem by the Roman army, and a thousand other instances of punishment, have displayed in an eminent degree the holiness and justice of God as moral Governor, and vindicated and supported his law. Such a definition would make no distinction between the atonement of Christ and any signal punishment of the wicked. And surely that must be a very defective definition, which makes no distinction between the sufferings of Christ and the punishment of transgressors, and which will apply to one of them just as well as to the other.

But it may be said, this is the representation which is made of the atonement in Rom. 3 : 25 ; "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," etc. Here the Apostle represents the atonement as designed to declare or make manifest the righteousness of God. Be it so. It was evidently one of the objects of Christ's death to declare the righteousness of God. But pointing out *one* of the objects of Christ's death is not to give a satisfactory definition of the atonement. We know it is the object of everything which exists to display the glory of God. But it is no proper definition of any one particular thing to say, it is that which displays the glory of God. The single text referred to does not stop with saying, that the propitiation for sin was designed to declare the righteousness of God. It goes further, and informs us *who made the propitiation, and that he made it by his blood, and that it was made to procure the forgiveness of our sins.* So that, if we would give a definition of the atonement that shall correspond merely with this single passage, we must do more than say, it is that which displays the holiness and righteousness of God. We are here taught that Jesus Christ made propitiation by his blood for the purpose of declaring God's righteousness, so that he might be just and the justifier of those who believe. But in making out a definition of this great doctrine of Christianity, we must not confine ourselves to a single passage of Scripture, but attend to all the passages which relate to the subject. And then

Digitized by Google

we must frame a definition that shall contain a plain outline of the subject, and distinguish it from everything else. Now the Scriptures teach the momentous fact, that *Christ died as an expiatory sacrifice.* A definition of the atonement must then contain this fact. But the Scriptures teach also that Christ suffered and died, not on account of any sin in himself, but *for our sins, the just for the unjust.* This essential point must be contained in a just definition, especially as this vicariousness of his sufferings is the circumstance which distinguishes them from the sufferings which moral agents endure on account of their own sins. The Scriptures further teach, that *Christ by his death manifested God's righteousness*, and they teach by implication that *his death answered the same ends as would have been answered by our suffering for ourselves the penalty of the violated law.* This design and effect of the atonement, in respect to the divine character and administration, must be mentioned in the definition, as also its design and effect in regard to us; that is, our *forgiveness* and *complete salvation.* These I think are the main points in the Scripture doctrine of atonement; and these are sufficient to show its nature, and to distinguish it from everything else. If then you inquire in what did the atonement, which the Scriptures reveal, primarily consist, or by what was it made? I reply, *by Christ's suffering for our sins, in our stead*, that is, *by his vicarious sufferings.* If you inquire what ends these vicarious sufferings answered? I reply, as to God and his law, they answered substantially the same ends as would have been answered by our suffering for our own sins; and their end as to us, was to procure our forgiveness and eternal life, including sanctification and the blessedness of heaven. A brief definition of the atonement then might be given in some such manner as this: *It is Christ's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, in the place of sinners, for the purpose of vindicating the violated law, manifesting the righteousness of God, making expiation for sin, and procuring forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life for all believers.* I do not give this as the only proper definition; for it may be varied, and made more or less particular and full, as occasion requires.

Digitized by Google

Rev. George Payne, LL. D., says; "The atonement may be defined as that satisfaction for sin, which was rendered to God as the moral Governor of the world, by the perfect obedience unto death of our Lord Jesus Christ, — a satisfaction which has removed every obstacle, resulting from the divine perfections and government, to the bestowment of mercy upon the guilty." But however varied and however short the definition may be, it should always present such an outline of the doctrine as will show what it is according to the Scriptures, and will clearly distinguish it from everything else.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXIX.

PROPITIATION. SATISFACTION OF JUSTICE. DID CHRIST ANSWER THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW AND ENDURE ITS PENALTY? DID HE PAY THE DEBT OF SINNERS? DID HE CANCEL THE CLAIMS OF THE LAW AGAINST TRANSGRESSORS?

It is my earnest and devout desire to treat this foundation doctrine in such a manner, that nothing shall be left doubtful or obscure. It is therefore my intention, though it may render some repetition unavoidable, to explain several phrases and answer several inquiries relating to the subject more distinctly and fully, than was consistent with my plan in the preceding Lectures.

1. *Christ is said to have made a propitiation for our sins. What is the precise meaning of this expression, and of other similar expressions?*

The words *propitiation*, *atonement*, and *reconciliation*, have the same general sense; that is, the *means of rendering God propitious to sinners*, — the means of averting merited punishment from them, bringing about a reconciliation between them and God, and procuring his special favor. The change produced in this case is not in the character or any of the attributes of God, but *in his administration towards sinners, and in their character and state*. The perfections and purposes of God and the principles of his government, are absolutely immutable. But this very immutability of God may, under a change of circumstances, lead to a change in his conduct towards his creatures, and this may be

Digitized by Google

followed by a change in them. As sinners, we deserve punishment, and God, as our Lawgiver and Judge, has threatened to inflict it. But on account of a new and most important measure in the moral world, that is, the mediation of Christ, he forgives our sins, and treats us with favor. What Christ did and suffered in our behalf, *procured this favor*, and this is the same as to say, *it rendered God propitious*. It is sometimes said the atonement rendered God merciful. And this is true, if God's being merciful means, his actually exercising mercy towards us, or bestowing upon us the blessings of his mercy. This is the meaning of the word in many instances, and always when we pray that God would be merciful to us. We do not pray that God would change his perfections, but that he would bestow upon us the fruits of his compassion and love. Unitarians reject the doctrine of atonement on the pretence that it represents God as wanting in mercy, and as needing to be wrought upon by something from without, before he can be induced to show us any favor. But they are plainly inconsistent with themselves; for they represent *repentance* as the means of procuring divine forgiveness and favor. And with reference to their principles, we might very properly ask them, is God so wanting in kindness that he must be wrought upon by our repentance, before he can be willing to bestow favors upon us? To say that God will be favorable to sinners on condition of their repentance, or that repentance is the appropriate means of procuring God's favor, implies just as much want of goodness in God, and just as much changeableness, as to say that the death of Christ is the means of procuring his favor. But neither the one nor the other of these implies that God is changeable, any more than saying that the wickedness of men brings his judgments upon them, or is the reason why he inflicts evil. The fact is, that if God is infinitely and immutably wise and good, he must conform his administration to the character and circumstances of his subjects, and the state of things in his kingdom. His varying his conduct as circumstances vary, results from his unchangeable perfection. So when we assert that the death of Christ is the means of rendering God

Digitized by Google

propitious to sinners, or the means of procuring their forgiveness, we are far from implying that God is not, in himself, infinitely and unchangeably wise and good; for it was in fact God's infinite wisdom and goodness which fixed upon the death of Christ as the means of procuring salvation for sinners. And when we assert this, we are far from implying any change in the character of God, inasmuch as the atonement produces its effect, *not upon the perfections of his nature, but upon the acts of his administration; that is, upon his treatment of sinners.* This view of the subject is in perfect accordance with what we see of the dispensations of providence, and with the teachings of Scripture. Many changes occur in the course of providence, changes from mercy to judgment, and from judgment to mercy. Scripture teaches that God set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin, that he might be just and the justifier of them who believe; implying that, without such a propitiation, he could not pardon and save them consistently with his justice. *Propitiation*, I have said, *is that which renders God propitious*, or *secures his favor.* But this propitiation, let it be remembered, does not take away or diminish God's opposition to the sinful character of transgressors. Instead of this, it makes that opposition more visible. It does not take away or diminish God's hatred of sin; but more clearly manifests it. It does not lower the demand of love and obedience which he makes upon us in his law, but confirms it. It does not alter the penalty of the law, or detract from its severity, but establishes and vindicates it as perfectly just. It is evidently in these and similar ways, that the death of Christ becomes a propitiation for sin, and thus procures salvation for sinners on the conditions prescribed in the gospel.

2. *It has been common to represent the sufferings of Christ, or his expiatory sacrifice, as a satisfaction to divine justice. What does this representation mean? And is it just and proper?*

Reply. The original and exact sense of the word satisfaction is, *doing enough — doing what is sufficient.* And this is the meaning which the word commonly conveys. Satisfaction in any case is, doing what is required — doing enough — doing what is

Digitized by Google

necessary. Now as to the death of Christ by which the atonement was made; — who but God is competent to judge whether enough was done — whether all was done which the case required? And what is the judgment of God? By appointing the death of Christ as a propitiation, that is, as a means of procuring forgiveness for sinners, he clearly expressed his mind, and showed that he judged it to be sufficient — to be all that the case required. He showed that he was satisfied with it. Had he not seen it to be sufficient to satisfy him, he would not have appointed it.

But was divine *justice* satisfied? Answer. When we say that justice as an attribute of God, or as a principle of his government, is satisfied, we *personify* justice; we speak of it as though it were a person. This figure of speech is very common. I have no objection to it. But we shall do well to remember that it is a figure of speech. We come then to the question; is divine justice satisfied with Christ crucified as a propitiation for sin? To determine this, consider a little what is the object of divine justice — what it aims at — what it seeks to do. Exercised according to the common, regular course of a moral government, justice seeks the punishment of offenders. *This is its proximate end.* But what is its *ultimate* end? What does justice ultimately aim to accomplish by punishment? The end aimed at in punishment is, manifestly, to display the moral character of God, to express his mind as to the goodness of his law and the evil of sin, to support his government, and to secure the highest welfare of his kingdom. We know this is the end aimed at, because it is the end actually accomplished. Now all thinking men who hold to the doctrine of atonement, believe that the vicarious sufferings of Christ answered all the great, ultimate ends which divine justice sought in the merited punishment of transgressors — all the ends which would have been answered, had that punishment been fully executed upon them. If then all the important ends, which justice sought and which it would have accomplished by the punishment of sinners, are accomplished by the death of Christ; how can it be otherwise than that

Digitized by Google

justice is satisfied? It seems evident that divine justice must be as well satisfied with the sufferings of Christ, as with the punishment of sinners, if those sufferings perfectly answered the ends which it aims at. If Christ's sufferings manifest the righteousness of God, and honor his character as much as the punishment of sinners could have done; if they do as much to discountenance sin, to give influence to law, and to promote order and happiness among intelligent beings; what more can justice ask? This is all that the case calls for. Justice, seeing the good it aimed at fully accomplished, says, *it is enough*. Intelligent, moral beings cannot regard pain or suffering, in itself considered, as a good, as an object of desire. Whenever it is considered as desirable, it is on account of the relation it has to sin, its procuring cause, and to the ends which it is to answer. In this, I think all must agree. And so unquestionably divine justice regards it. For divine justice is not a blind principle aiming at no end; much less is it a malevolent principle aiming at a bad end, and delighting to inflict needless pain. Now if divine justice regards the merited punishment of sinners as desirable, on account of the ends to be answered by it, it will fix the degree of punishment as the ends of punishment require. If the ends to be answered by punishment absolutely require that sinners, in their own persons, should suffer a great and endless misery; justice will be satisfied with nothing short of that. If the important ends which justice aims at can be accomplished by a small punishment, it is satisfied with a small punishment. And if all the ends of punishment are perfectly and safely accomplished in another way, that is, by the sufferings of a substitute; then justice is satisfied with that, and as well satisfied as it could be by the merited punishment of sinners themselves. In this last case, it is satisfied, not by the execution of the penalty of the law upon sinners, but by something else of as much value, something which answers all the ends aimed at as well. If God really looks upon the punishment of sinners as desirable, in itself considered, why has he taken so much pains to save them from it? And if he looks upon the happiness

Digitized by Google

of sinners as in itself undesirable, then why has he done so much to secure it?

Should you find any difficulty remaining, you may perhaps remove it by varying the phraseology. To ask whether *the justice of God* is satisfied, is the same in regard to sense, as to ask whether a *just God* is satisfied, or whether God is satisfied *in respect to his justice?* For surely we are not to conceive that God and his justice are two separate beings. The question is then, whether God, as a just moral Governor, is satisfied with the sufferings of Christ, instead of the punishment of sinners? Now if he is not satisfied with it, then why did he appoint it? And why has he in so many ways shown his approbation of it? Why was he so well pleased in Christ, who came for the very purpose of suffering in our stead, and thus procuring our salvation? Why did he raise Christ from the dead, thus giving testimony that he accepted the sacrifice he had made by his death, and confirming him in the character of a Redeemer? And why does he offer eternal life to sinners, and actually bestow it upon believers, on the ground of Christ's death? The whole expression which God has made of his own mind in regard to the vicarious death of Christ, is an expression of perfect satisfaction.

Farther. If the justice of God is not satisfied with the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, then where is the harmony of the divine attributes? If justice is not satisfied, then justice and God's other attributes are not agreed. Benevolence or goodness is satisfied; wisdom is satisfied; but justice is not satisfied. And so God's attributes are at war among themselves. Or if you speak of God himself; then the substituted sufferings satisfied him, as to his benevolence and mercy, and satisfied him as to his wisdom, but did not satisfy him as to his justice. As to his justice, the death of Christ is not enough. Though it answered all the ends of punishment as to the character and government of God, the honor of his law, and the order and happiness of his kingdom, yet justice does not feel this to be sufficient. It is still dissatisfied. Why? Because sinners themselves are not punished as they deserve. Divine justice will never be at ease

Digitized by Google

while any are saved. It will always feel a craving desire, which nothing can satisfy but the endless misery of all pardoned offenders; — while it is still true that God's holiness and righteousness and the evil of sinning against him are more clearly displayed, his whole character more honored, his law better supported, and the good of his kingdom more effectually secured without their misery, than with it. And it finally comes to this, that God has adopted a plan of conduct, and has taken immense pains to carry it into execution, and yet after all he himself, as a just and holy Sovereign, is not fully satisfied with it. And if God is not satisfied with it, how can we be satisfied? If we are his friends, how can we help sympathizing with his feelings in regard to his injured justice? How can we be perfectly satisfied with our happy state, when we see it has occasioned lasting dissatisfaction to God, in respect to one of the essential and glorious attributes of his character?

3. *It is the common opinion of Christians, that Christ by his death satisfied the law, that he fully answered the demands of the law, and that he endured its penalty. Are these representations Scriptural? And how are they to be understood?*

Reply. When the difficulty attending a subject arises from the ambiguity of the language employed, it may generally be removed by substituting other language, more clear and definite. Perhaps we shall find this to be the case here. For it is not always easy to determine what writers mean, when they say that Christ satisfied the law, or answered its demands. The law requires of us, as rational, moral beings, that we should love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. This is its great demand. The demand is made upon us personally. The obedience of Christ was not literally our obedience. It might stand for it. It might answer the same ends. But it is not true, that when *Christ* obeyed the law, *you* and *I*, in our own persons, actually obeyed. For truly we could not literally act in obeying the law, before we existed. And whatever language may have been used, no sober man ever entertained or could entertain such a thought as this. The same as to the demand which the violated law makes upon us

Digitized by Google

as transgressors. It requires that we should die. Its penalty respects us, and rests upon us personally. The law does not say, if *we* sin, *Christ* shall die; but *the soul that sinneth it shall die.* And who ever entertained the thought, that Christ's dying was *literally* the sinner's dying?

But there is no occasion to dwell longer on this point. And what I have advanced is intended not so much to refute the notion referred to, as to show that no man ever did or ever can believe it. What the current language of Scripture is, we have already seen. Christ suffered and died *for our sins;* that is, *on their account.* He suffered *for us;* that is, *in our stead,* — in order that we, who otherwise must have suffered the penalty of the law, might be exempt from it. The Bible does indeed declare that Christ saved us from the curse of the law, being made *a curse* for us. But it does not say that he endured *literally the very curse* denounced by the law against sinners, *the very curse* from which believers are saved; but it says, "he was made *a curse for us.* As it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The particular curse spoken of was crucifixion, which was a very painful, ignominious death. But crucifixion does not constitute the exact curse denounced by the law against transgressors; and very few who have fallen under that curse, have suffered crucifixion. The language of the Bible on this subject, and the corresponding language of Christians, is perfectly just and proper. But it must have a reasonable construction, and must be explained and limited by other expressions relating to the same subject. The law of God was indeed satisfied by the death of Christ in this sense, that all the good ends which it sought, and which would have been accomplished by our perfect obedience or by our merited punishment, were accomplished by the obedience and death of Christ. In his vicarious sufferings the law fully compassed the ends which would otherwise have been compassed by the punishment of sinners; that is, it completely answered, *in another way,* the ends which would have been answered by a direct and full execution of the penalty of the law, — which penalty was a very different thing

Digitized by Google

from crucifixion. Or to express the same thing differently; the law was satisfied by the substitution of Christ's death for the punishment of transgressors. But if we would speak with strict propriety, we must say, the Supreme *Lawgiver* is satisfied; — for satisfaction really pertains to a person. If what the Lawgiver aims at is done by the vicarious death of Christ, as fully as would have been done by the punishment of sinners; why should he not be satisfied? And if his great object as Lawgiver could not have been accomplished by the death of Christ, then why did he appoint that death as a substitute for the punishment of sinners? It would really seem that God had a preference for the former. And we should naturally think that the reason of that preference was, that on the whole more good would result from the sufferings of Christ, than from the execution of the penalty upon sinners.

As to the demands of the law; Christ undertook to do all that was necessary in order that those who believe, might be forgiven. Whatever demands the law or the Lawgiver made upon Christ, *as our Redeemer*, *as our substitute*, or *surety*, those demands he fully answered. And thus he *virtually* answered the demands which the law had against us. The same in regard to the penalty. Christ suffered it *virtually*. He suffered that which had a like effect, or which had a like value in God's moral government. As to the ends of government, it was as though the curse of the law had been endured literally. So that it is sufficiently correct for common purposes, especially for the purpose of impression, to say, as Storr and Flatt and a thousand others have said, *that Christ endured the penalty of the law*, *that he suffered the punishment due to us*. And this mode of representation is perfectly justified by Scripture example. For when the prophet says, "he bare the sin of many — the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all," — and when the Apostle says, "he bare our sins in his own body, on the tree," the obvious meaning is, that *the punishment* of our iniquities was laid upon him, or that he endured *the suffering* which our sins deserved. And whenever phraseology like this is used, it is only necessary to keep in mind, that it is used for the

Digitized by Google

purpose of brevity and impression, and is to be construed with a reasonable latitude, not with an over-rigid exactness; just as we construe other expressions used in Scripture and in free conversation. If we were to lay aside all the language which will not bear to be construed *literally* and *strictly*, we should lay aside what is most impassioned and moving in the Scriptures and in common discourse. That language is good which is suited to the nature of the subject, and which, with a reasonable and candid construction, is adapted to impress the truth upon the understanding and the heart.

4. *Did Christ pay the debt of sinners?* In the Scriptures, and in common discourse, the punishment which sinners deserve is figuratively represented as a debt. "Forgive us our debts;" that is, remit the punishment of our offences. The figure is intelligible and striking. As those who are in debt are held to pay a sum of money to their creditor; so sinners are held to suffer the penalty of the law which they have violated. As the creditor can demand payment of his debtors; so the Lawgiver and Judge can require sinners to suffer merited punishment. Accordingly, when they suffer that punishment, they are represented as paying their debt to God, or to divine justice. But the punishment of penitent sinners is remitted. That is, the same figure of speech being retained, their *debt* is *forgiven*. And it is forgiven through the vicarious sufferings of Christ. He paid what God accepted, in lieu of the debt which they owed. From a regard to what he paid, God forgives their debt. Thus he *virtually paid their debt*. He did that which was accepted in the place of it, that which answered the same purposes, and which secured their forgiveness.

But in regard to this kind of language, which is so frequent in the Scriptures and in religious discourse, we must remember that the language is more or less figurative; and then we must determine the sense of the figure, and the extent of the analogy implied, by the nature of the subject, and by all the instructions which the Scriptures give concerning it. Proceeding in this manner, as we do in all other instances of figurative language, we shall

Digitized by Google

easily avoid the difficulties and mistakes which have been occasioned by carrying the analogy implied in the metaphor to an unwarrantable length. Many of the circumstances which belong to a literal debt or an obligation to pay money, do not belong to a sinner's obligation to suffer punishment. This obligation is of a moral nature; it arises from the moral conduct of him who is to suffer; it pertains to a moral law and administration, and is directed to moral ends. Who can suppose that a debt of this kind, that is, an obligation to suffer punishment for the violation of a moral law, is attended throughout with the same circumstances with a pecuniary debt? When a man's pecuniary debt is paid, or when that is done which his creditor accepts in liew of it, he is no longer liable to be called upon for payment, and it would be unjust and oppressive in his creditor to require payment. But this is not true in regard to the atonement, which does, in a certain sense, pay the debt of sinners. Their ill desert is neither taken away nor diminished. Nor would it be any injustice to them, if God should inflict punishment. This all believers acknowledge and feel. The atonement gives them no personal claim to salvation. They cannot demand it as what is due to them on the ground of justice. They cannot say, they should be treated unjustly, or as they do not deserve, if they should not be saved. The atonement was never designed to put sinners in this condition, and to make salvation a matter of debt to them. God provided the propitiation — that he might be just while he justifies believers; not that he might be obliged in justice to save them, but that he might graciously save them, might save them contrary to their personal desert, and yet do it consistently with the honor of his justice. The death of Christ prepared the way for believing sinners to be pardoned and saved by grace. It was never intended to prepare the way for any to be saved without faith, nor even for believers to be saved in any other way than by the abounding of divine grace.

Thus while I maintain the propriety of freely using the Scripture phraseology which represents our exposure to punishment as a debt, and the propriety also of speaking of Christ as paying or

Digitized by Google

discharging this debt by suffering in our stead, and thus procuring our forgiveness; I maintain that both these representations are metaphorical, and are to be understood with such qualifications as the nature of the subject requires, and that the neglect of these necessary qualifications would lead us, as it has led others, into very pernicious errors.

5. *Did Christ cancel the claims of the law against transgressors?*

Although this question is not essentially different from some of those to which we have already attended, it may be of use to consider it a little, as a phraseology of this kind is often found in inspired as well as uninspired writings.

Did Christ cancel the claims of the law against transgressors? I answer, yes, if they repent and believe? To *cancel*, taken literally, is *to draw cross lines over a writing*, such as an account of a merchant against a debtor; *to obliterate it, or blot it out.* It denotes that the account, or the claim of the merchant is given up, or that the debtor is freed from the obligation to pay what is due. Apply this to our subject. To cancel the claims of the violated law against us, is to *forgive our sins.* Forgiveness is often represented in Scripture under the same figure. "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions. Now this blotting out, or cancelling of the penal demands of the law, that is, our forgiveness, comes to us through the mediation of Christ. He died to procure our forgiveness, — to procure the cancelling of the penalty of the law for all sinners who believe.

Language of this kind, understood literally and with an extreme strictness, is open to various objections, such as have been urged by Unitarians. But such a literal and extreme construction is altogether unreasonable, and frequently betrays a carping, fault-finding disposition. The sense intended by the language before us, is obvious. Christ died to exempt us from the penalty of the law, or from the punishment which we deserve for sin. But this statement of the design of Christ's death, instead of being taken in the largest possible sense, is to be qualified and guarded by all the teachings of Scripture. Christ procures de-

Digitized by Google

liverance from the condemnation of the law, not indiscriminately and absolutely for all transgressors, but for each and all who exercise a true faith in him. For those who comply with the proposal of mercy in the gospel and cordially receive Christ by faith, a complete forgiveness is procured. The curse of the law, or its penal demand against them, is cancelled. God pardons them — he casts their sins into the depths of the sea — nothing is charged against them in the book of his remembrance. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" This full forgiveness is secured to believers by the blood of the cross.

If you inquire, whether it is expedient for us to use such metaphorical language; I answer as before, that the inspired writers are our patterns, and that no valid objection can lie against us for using such language as they employ, if we use it with the same meaning and design with them. An attempt to restrict ourselves in our religious discourse to such language as has a literal and rigidly logical exactness, would probably prove unsuccessful; or if it should succeed, would be fraught with injury to the interests of evangelical truth.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXX.

WAS THE DEATH OF CHRIST A FULL EQUIVALENT AND LEGAL SUBSTITUTE FOR THE PUNISHMENT OF SINNERS? WAS CHRIST OUR REPRESENTATIVE? WERE OUR SINS IMPUTED TO HIM? WAS HIS ACTIVE OBEDIENCE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE ATONEMENT?

6. *Was the death of Christ a full equivalent for the punishment of sinners? and was it a legal substitute?*

The exact meaning of *equivalent* is, *equal in value or worth*, *of equal avail*, or *of equal influence*. The question then is, whether the death of Christ is in a moral view of equal avail, or equal in value, with the punishment of sinners. To this we have already attended. Christ's death answered the ends of punishment, so that the honor of the Lawgiver, the authority of the law and the welfare of the moral world are as well secured, as they could have been by the merited punishment of transgressors. And this is the same as to say, the death of Christ is, in a moral view, of equal value with their punishment, or is an equivalent for it. And it is a full equivalent, because it fully answers the ends of punishment, answers them as perfectly as they could have been answered by the infliction of punishment according to the threat of the law. It might be shown, that the death of Christ is *more than an equivalent* for the punishment of sinners, as it doubtless answers the ends of a just punishment in a higher degree than could have been answered by the punishment itself, besides accomplishing other objects of everlasting importance, which the punishment of

Digitized by Google

sinners could never have accomplished; so that, in the final result, the vicarious death of Christ will be the cause of vast gain to the universe.

But is the death of Christ a *legal* substitute, and a *legal* equivalent? The answer to this must vary according to the sense we affix to the word legal. If by a *legal* substitute or equivalent, be meant that which is *provided by law*, or that which is exactly conformed to the letter of the law; then the death of Christ is not legal. For the law itself provides for nothing in case of transgression, but the punishment of transgressors. Its precepts and its sanctions, taken literally, relate only to those who are the proper subjects of law. But if by a *legal* substitute is meant a substitute which supports the principles and answers the ends of law; then the death of Christ *is* a legal substitute, and a legal equivalent. In its efficacy to accomplish the great purposes of a moral government, it is fully equal, not to say superior, to the direct execution of the penalty of the law.

7. *Did Christ take the law-place of sinners?* Answer. The law-place of sinners, that is, the place or condition pointed out for them by the law, is *a place of suffering*. Christ took this place for them, or suffered in their stead, so far and in such a manner as the ends of suffering required. He took their law-place, not by enduring an evil of the same kind and duration with what the law threatened to them, but by suffering what was sufficient to accomplish the objects contemplated in the penal sanction of the law, and what the righteous Lawgiver accepted in lieu of the punishment threatened against transgressors.

8. *Was Christ, when he suffered, our representative?* Answer. A representative, as the word is commonly used, is one who is authorized *to act for others*, one who *conducts the affairs of others for them*. A representative then, is *one who transacts business vicariously*, or as a substitute for others. What he does he does in their place, and they enjoy the benefit of it as though they did it themselves. In the affairs of civil government and the common business of life, our representative is generally one whom we ourselves choose or appoint to act for us. In this respect, Christ

Digitized by Google

was not our representative. He was not chosen or authorised by any act of ours, to do and suffer in our stead. But he was chosen and authorized by God. It comes then to the same thing as before. Christ was the representative of his people in such a sense, that the benefits of what he did and suffered accrue to them. When we believe in him, we receive him as one appointed by God to act as our representative, and, in our stead, to bear the burden of our guilt, so that we might be forgiven and saved.

I have never been accustomed to speak very frequently of Christ as our representative or our surety. Nor do I think it desirable that this phraseology should so abound in religious discourse, as in any manner to set aside the language of Scripture. But it has been freely used by writers of the highest excellence; and when candidly construed, it conveys plain Bible-truth. I would not reject it; still I would guard with all possible care against any misconceptions which it may have occasioned. If the cause of truth required, I would omit the word altogether. But I am far from thinking this to be the case. Let us however avoid logomachy, and exercise becoming candor in ascertaining the exact sense, which the word under consideration and other similar terms are intended to communicate.

In regard to several of the phrases which have been mentioned, permit me to say that, in my opinion, gross misconceptions, erroneous reasonings and whimsical speculations have arisen in the minds of men from the practice of carrying the sense of these phrases, and also of Scripture metaphors, to an unwarrantable length. And though it appears from fact, that Christianity may exist and exert a saving efficacy in a state of alliance with various misconceptions, and various whimsical and erratic speculations, it can certainly exist and exert its saving efficacy much better without them.

9. *Were our sins imputed to Christ? or was our guilt transferred to him?*

The literal and primary sense of the word *impute*, is, *to charge to any person his own actions or qualities.* "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity," that is his own iniquity.

Digitized by Google

Not to impute sin to any one who is a sinner, is not to charge his own sin to him, and not to punish him for it; that is, *to forgive him*. And to impute sin to any one, is to charge it to him, and to inflict the punishment due. Now as our sins are our own personal attributes or actions, it is impossible they should become the personal attributes or actions of Christ. To say that our sin, as a personal attribute or act, is so imputed to Christ, or that our sinful character or ill desert is so transferred to him, that he himself becomes *personally sinful or ill deserving*, is what no man can believe. It is an absurdity. And those who have used language which seems to imply this, have evidently affixed a secondary or figurative sense to the language; for notwithstanding this imputation or transfer of our sins to Christ, they consider him to be perfectly innocent and holy.

But the word impute is used sometimes in the Bible, and often in theological works, in a secondary sense. The Apostle, Rom. 4: 6, speaks of God's imputing righteousness to a man who is not personally righteous. The connection shows perfectly what the word means. He says "David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works;" and he immediately tells us *how* David describes it. "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered." For God to impute righteousness to us, in the sense here intended, is to treat us as though we were righteous, to forgive our sins, to withhold punishment, and to bestow upon us the benefits of righteousness, while we have not the righteousness itself. Now if we speak of the imputation of our sins to Christ in *this* sense of imputation, it is the same as to speak of his suffering on account of our sins, or of his enduring evil *as though he were an offender*. In this sense of the phrase, we may very properly say, that God imputed our sins to Christ, or transferred our guilt to him, or as the Scriptures speak, that he laid our sins upon Christ. The meaning of all the expressions is the same, namely, that God inflicted sufferings on Christ for our sin, and so transferred our sin, that is, the punishment of it, from us to him. It will be found universally true, that when the Scriptures use this kind of phrase-

Digitized by Google

ology, and speak of one's bearing sin, of laying sin upon one, of imputing sin, even one's own sin, they refer to the punishment of sin, to the suffering of evil on account of sin. Now if men will only agree to use this Scripture language in this obvious sense, there will be no farther difficulty. We may with perfect propriety retain the phraseology which is in common use, and which is either exactly conformed, or at least very similar, to what we find in the word of God, only taking care to affix to it the meaning which a man of common sense and candor and piety would naturally derive from the current representations of Scripture, and from the nature of the subject. Say, if you please, that God imputed our sins to Christ, meaning that he inflicted sufferings upon him on account of our sins. Say, if you please, that our guilt was transferred to him, or was laid upon him, only remembering that this is a common and very impressive figure of speech, which puts the cause for the effect, and that the meaning is, he transferred suffering, the effect or consequence of guilt, from us who deserved it, to Christ our holy Saviour. And in all your contemplations and reasonings on the subject, keep in mind, that moral evil never became the personal attribute of Christ; that he was never in any respect, either in outward action or in heart, a transgressor of God's law; that he was perfectly holy, harmless, undefiled, and that in reality what he had to do with sin as our substitute, was to suffer on account of it, and so to procure our forgiveness.

10. The next question is, *whether the active obedience of Christ was an essential part of the atonement, or helped to constitute its value and efficacy.*

In order to reach a proper answer, I shall consider the following points, namely, 1. What is meant by Christ's active obedience? 2. In his work as our Redeemer and High Priest, was his active obedience connected with his sufferings? or were they or could they be separated? and if they had been separated, could either of them, taken without the other, have had any efficacy to secure our salvation? 3. What is meant by atonement; and could it be effected either by living obediently without suffering death, or by dying without an obedient life? And 4. As to the

Digitized by Google

blessings involved in justification, namely forgiveness and eternal life; are they separate or separable from each other, and could either Christ's active obedience or his death, taken by itself without the other, have had any influence to secure either our forgiveness, or our eternal life?

1. What is meant by Christ's active obedience? The Apostle says, Rom. 5: 19, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the *obedience* of one shall many be made righteous." The work of Christ by which believers are *made righteous*, or are *justified*, is here called "obedience." His death, in which he exercised his obedience, was doubtless meant to be included. But if that which procured our justification consisted in his *death alone*, it would certainly appear strange that the Apostle should give to it the expressive and comprehensive name of "*obedience*." He may refer *specially* to his *obedience unto death*. But how can we suppose that he refers to *that only*, unless we first adopt the opinion that nothing but Christ's death was concerned in procuring our justification? In v. 18, the Apostle expresses the same sentiment in another form. Justification, he says, comes by "the *righteousness* of one. According to this, "righteousness" procures the same blessing as "obedience," that blessing being called *justification* in one place, and *being made righteous* or *just* in another place. Now who can suppose that the Apostle would call the great work which procures our justification, "the obedience" and "the righteousness" of Christ, if he had nothing in view but his *death*. Every candid person must, I think, be satisfied, that the Apostle meant to refer to Christ's *obedience* in the large, comprehensive sense, that is, to his *obedient life*, as well as to his *obedient death*. His *doing the will of God*, whether in life or in death, is evidently intended. This is expressly spoken of as the object of Christ's advent, Psalm 40: 8; "Lo I come, I delight *to do thy will*, O my God; *thy law is within my heart*." John 4: 34; "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." His *doing the will of God*, and his *righteousness*, must be understood to include both his *obedient, holy life*, and his *obedient death*; and these are what we mean by his active and passive obedience.

Digitized by Google

But the question to be considered relates to Christ's *active obedience*, that is, his *obedient life*, in distinction from his passive obedience, or his obedient *sufferings*. The distinction is the one commonly made, and I shall admit it without objection. Christ's active *obedience* was, then, *his perfect conformity with the moral law*, and, as he was a Jew, *with the ritual law also;* which law, whether moral or ritual, required no suffering except for transgression.

2. We are to consider the connection of Christ's active obedience with his death. This connection was a matter of fact. Both obedience and death belonged to the Son of God, and they belonged to him as *Redeemer*. They were necessarily joined together. For the same disposition which led the Saviour to obey God as the Author of the moral and the ceremonial law, must have led him freely to obey God as the Author of the dispensation of grace, which required an atoning sacrifice; the same inward principle which led him to comply with the command of God requiring him to be holy, could not have failed to lead him voluntarily to comply with the command which required him *to lay down his life for his people.*

And while it is true that obedience and death were both united in the person of Christ *in fact*, and *from the necessary operation of moral causes;* it is also true, that if either of them had been found in Christ *without the other*, it could have had no efficacy to secure our salvation. Had *he lived obediently without dying*, he would indeed have been excellent and praise-worthy in the sight of God; but how could his obedient life have redeemed sinners, any more than the obedient life of an angel? If God had seen that *obedience without suffering* could secure our salvation, who can believe that he would have required him to endure suffering, and that of such terrible severity? Jesus prayed, that if it were *possible*, he might be exempt from the agonies of the cross. If it *had been* "*possible*,"—if it had been consistent with the object for which he became incarnate, who can doubt that his prayer would have been answered? For who can suppose that God would inflict unnecessary pain upon any one, especially upon his

Digitized by Google

only-begotten Son, whom he loved more than all the creation? The all-wise God knew that obedience alone could have no saving efficacy. Though perfect obedience in us would have been sufficient to prevent our death, and the necessity of a Redeemer; yet obedience in our *Redeemer* was not sufficient to save us *as sinners*. Without the shedding of blood, there could have been no remission; and if no remission, certainly no salvation.

On the other hand, *suffering* could have had no saving efficacy *without obedience*. Had Christ been *disobedient*, the justice of God would have had demands against him, and he must have suffered death on his own account; and how could his death, in that case, have availed to our benefit, any more than the death of any other offender? It may be said that it was God's appointment which gave the death of Christ power to procure our forgiveness. Be it so. But remember, that the vicarious death which he appointed, was the death of a *holy* Mediator. The appointment of Christ was not one which would stain the purity of God's character by bringing him into alliance with unrighteousness. He whom God anointed as our Great High Priest, "was *holy*, *harmless*, *undefiled*,"—like the sacrificial lamb, "*without blemish*." A holy God could have appointed no other, could have had complacency in no other, and could have admitted no other to approach him as Mediator. The idea that God would have accepted the merited death of a *sinner*, how exalted soever his natural endowments, as a substitute for the punishment which other sinners deserve, and as the medium through which their salvation should come, is abhorrent to every principle of piety in us, and utterly contrary to all the perfections of God; for all his perfections are totally and unchangeably opposed to sin; and his spotless, holy character, comes out clearly to view in every part of the plan he has adopted for the redemption of the world, and particularly in the character of the anointed Saviour.

3. The nature of the *atonement*. Definite ideas on this point are necessary to a satisfactory answer to the question, whether Christ's active obedience was a part of the *atonement*. Look now at the New Testament use of the word. The English word,

Digitized by Google

atonement, is found in relation to the present subject, in only one place, Rom. 5 : 11 ; "By whom we have received the *atonement*," καταλλαγὴν, *reconciliation*. See Schleusner and Robinson on the word, and on καταλλάσσω. The word refers to a previous state of alienation and enmity, and implies a change from that to a state of friendship. By or through Christ *we, believers, have received the atonement*. The state of enmity has been removed, and the favor of God restored to us. In common theological use, atonement signifies the grand *expedient* or *means*, by or through which this reconciliation is effected. And it seems to have exactly this sense in Rom. 11 : 15. The casting away of the Jews was the *reconciling*, that is, the *means* of reconciling the world. Was then the *active obedience* of Christ a part, and a necessary part of that work of Christ by which our forgiveness and our restoration to the divine favor was effected? In every point of view, the answer must be affirmative. Without perfect obedience to the divine law, Jesus could have made no atonement, could have done nothing to deliver us from punishment, and restore us to the favor of God. If he had been wanting in *obedience*, he would have been a *transgressor*, and could have suffered no more than justice required of him on his own account. And in that case, how could his sufferings have procured salvation for other sinners, or even for *himself?* Would not *he* have needed a Saviour as really as any other sinner? If a messenger of God that was disobedient, had endured the severest punishment, if he had suffered and should continue to suffer ever so long, his sufferings, according to the views of evangelical Christians, would not have exceeded his own deserts, and could in no way have availed to the salvation of others.

4. Our final inquiry respects *forgiveness*, or exemption from positive punishment, and *eternal blessedness* in heaven. *Are these two leading benefits*, which are involved in *justification*, *separate or separable from each other? And could either Christ's active obedience, or his death, taken separately, secure for us either the one or the other of these benefits?* Now while Christ's active obedience and his death have each a real and prominent influence in securing the two parts of justification above-named; still could

Digitized by Google

either of them have that influence without the other? That is, could the *death* of Christ, which some consider as constituting the whole of the atonement, procure forgiveness, *without an obedient life?* Or could his *obedience* procure the blessedness of heaven, *without his death?* I think not. In Rom. 5 : 19, the Apostle does indeed make justification the result of Christ's obedience. But justification, as he uses it, certainly includes *forgiveness*, as well as acceptance with God and eternal blessedness; and the obedience of Christ which he speaks of, must be substantially the same as the *righteousness* of Christ, mentioned just before, and must include what he in another place calls "*obedience unto death;*" that is, it must include the suffering of death, as really as conformity with the divine law. We cannot then ascribe the influence which Christ had in procuring the one or the other of the benefits of justification, to either part of his work separate from the other. His obedience could have procured no good for us without his death, and his death could have procured no good without his obedience. They were joined together in the work of the Redeemer, and both were necessary to each and all of the benefits he confers.

And as the two parts of Christ's work above mentioned are inseparably joined together, so also are the two parts of *justification*. They always go together in fact. No sinner ever partakes of forgiveness without acceptance and eternal life. And no one obtains acceptance with God and eternal life without being forgiven. And these two are not only joined together in fact, but from the nature of the case *must* be. To be accepted as righteous, and to enjoy eternal life, necessarily implies forgiveness. And does not forgiveness, taken in the large sense, involve eternal life? The penalty of the law implies eternal death. And can any one be freed from *eternal death* without having *eternal life?* The penalty of the law implies the wrath of God. And can any one be delivered from God's wrath without being restored to his favor? The penalty implies banishment from God and the loss of heaven. And can any one who is condemned to be banished from God, be delivered from that evil without being restored to

Digitized by Google

the *presence* of God? And can any one be freed from the *loss* of heavenly blessedness without coming to enjoy that blessedness? And, I add, can any one enjoy a holy blessedness without being sanctified, or made holy?

This, I think, is the teaching of revelation. Whenever the word of God speaks of either the *obedience* or the *death* of Christ as having a saving influence, it clearly implies the other. Christ's sufferings were the sufferings of a holy, obedient Saviour, and were holy, *obedient* sufferings. Both suffering and obedience were essential. Both had a saving efficacy, not separately, but jointly. It would be an utter mistake to suppose that one of them exerts a redemptive influence, or secures any good for us, without the other. They are parts of a whole, incapable of separation. And the same is true of the benefits involved in justification, namely, forgiveness in the restricted sense, and the favor of God and eternal life. They are parts of a unity. They constitute *salvation*. We often have occasion to speak of them distinctly. But they do not and cannot exist separately.

Dr. Emmons thought that the death of Christ, and that alone, made the atonement; and then, from the texts which teach us that Christ's death procured forgiveness of sin, he infers that forgiveness is the only blessing procured by the atonement. The texts to which he refers do indeed declare that the death of Christ procured forgiveness; but they do not declare that it procured this blessing *and no other*. Nor do these texts nor any others teach, that Christ's death made atonement *without his obedience*. His death had clearly a *special* influence in saving us from the curse of the law. But had it this influence *disconnected from his obedience and holiness?* Does the Apostle teach, Rom. 5 : 18, that his *righteousness*, by which our justification was procured, consisted of his death, and that only? Or does he teach that *justification* consists of *mere exemption from punishment, exclusive of eternal life?*

Dr. John Taylor is chargeable with a similar mistake on the other side. He takes the texts which teach that Christ died to deliver us from sin and make us holy, and from these he concludes

Digitized by Google

that *this* was *the sole object of his death;* just as Socinians fix upon the texts which declare Christ to be a man, and hence conclude that he was nothing more than a man. Why should writers overlook the principle, that our faith is to be derived, not from particular parts of Scripture, but from a connected view of the whole?

Instead then of attempting to push our theories beyond the plain import of Scripture on this great doctrine of the gospel, let us rejoice and glory in the one perfect Mediator, and in the one all-sufficient work of grace which he undertook and finished; and let us render him hearty thanks for that complete salvation which we owe to his *obedient, holy, and infinitely meritorious life and death.*

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXXI.

IS THE ATONEMENT GENERAL, OR PARTICULAR?

11. *Was the atonement general, or particular; universal, or limited? In other words; was the atonement provided for all men, or only for a part? Did Christ die for the whole world, or only for the elect?*

This question, as generally stated and discussed, has the attribute of remarkable indefiniteness and ambiguity; and hence it is adapted to create a warm and fruitless controversy — a controversy which may very easily be continued, as long as men can be found who take pleasure in strife. But the controversy may, I think, be quickly brought to a conclusion, if men will cherish a real desire to be agreed, and will take pains to understand one another, and especially if they will be content to make the Scriptures their guide.

In the discussion of this subject, we should do all we can to exclude logomachy, to prevent a needless expense of time, and to bring ourselves in the shortest way to the most satisfactory result. In order to this, let us see how many things we can lay out of the question, and so reduce the discussion to the most simple and intelligible form, and to the narrowest compass.

In pursuance of this plan, let me say that the point at issue is not, whether the atonement was so provided for all men, that all will actually be saved. As the controversy, so long agitated among evangelical Christians respecting the extent of the atone-

Digitized by Google

ment, does not relate to the question of universal salvation, this point is to be wholly excluded from the discussion. Those who are enlisted in this controversy, are united in the belief, that salvation will not be actually experienced by all men. So that the question whether Christ died for all men is to be understood as entirely distinct from the question whether he will actually save all.

Again. The point at issue is not, whether God *actually intended or determined to save all men.* Those who manage this controversy are united in the belief, that it is the purpose or determination of God to save only a part of the human race. The parties then agree that Christ did not die for all men in such a sense, that they will all actually obtain forgiveness through his blood; and they agree too that he did not die for all men with a *purpose* or *determination actually to save all.*

There are other points also, which we shall find it easy to dispose of satisfactorily, if we take pains to avoid obscurity in our thoughts and in our language, and to place the subject in a clear and distinct light.

One of these points is whether Christ died for his chosen people *absolutely* or *unconditionally?*

It is difficult to give a direct answer to this question, merely because it is difficult to know exactly what is meant by it. If the meaning is, whether Christ by his death so purchased or procured salvation for his chosen people, that nothing else is necessary and nothing ever to be admitted, as a meritorious cause or ground of their forgiveness; the answer is easy. Christ's death is a perfect cause or ground of our forgiveness. So far as merit is concerned, our righteousness, our good works are not needed, nay, they are expressly excluded from having any influence. Those who are saved do nothing which renders them deserving of the divine favor, or gives them any claim to it on the ground of justice. They are saved wholly through the blood of Christ. His obedience unto death laid a complete foundation for our forgiveness, and we can add nothing to it. If this is what is meant by Christ's dying for his people absolutely or unconditionally, then

Digitized by Google

undoubtedly he did this. And if the meaning is that he died for them with an unalterable purpose actually to save them, there is no doubt that this was the case. But if the meaning of the question is, whether he so died for them, and so purchased and so designed to purchase salvation for them, that nothing is required of them in order to their actually possessing eternal life; then the answer must be negative. For the word of God everywhere requires a duty of sinners, and represents it as absolutely necessary that they should repent and believe in order to their obtaining salvation; and that which is required of them in order to their obtaining salvation, may very properly, and in accordance with good usage, be called a *condition* of salvation. A *condition*, in this use of the word, is that which is to be done as *requisite* to some other thing; that which must exist as *a necessary adjunct* of something else. The word *terms* is often used in a similar sense. When the Scriptures require repentance of sinners in order to their forgiveness, and declare that except they repent they shall perish, the exact sense of *condition*, as here employed, is clearly suggested. All idea of merit is excluded. A condition may be meritorious in some cases, but not here. In this sense, then, Christ did not die for the elect or procure salvation for them absolutely and unconditionally; that is, he did not do it so as to supersede the necessity of repentance and faith on their part, as requisite to their enjoying eternal life.

Another point of inquiry is, whether there is any important sense, in which Christ died for his chosen people in distinction from others. The parties in the controversy generally agree that there is. He died for his peculiar people with a gracious and unalterable design actually to save them; — not however to save them *unconditionally*, that is, whether they repent and believe or not, but to save them in the manner, or on the conditions or terms stated in the gospel — their *compliance* with those terms being secured by his purpose, *as a part of the free and full salvation which he gives*. In this respect then there is a marked distinction. He died for those who were given him of the Father — he laid down his life for the sheep, with an ultimate design or destination which related to no others.

Digitized by Google

We come then to the question which is of so much special interest, whether Christ died for the world at large, or for human beings indiscriminately, in any sense? And if so in what sense? This is the main question, and, as it seems to me, the only important question, upon which there can be any difference of opinion among those who have any proper belief of the Scripture doctrine of atonement. They are agreed that Christ died for the elect, and that he died for them in a peculiar sense. They are agreed that notwithstanding this peculiar sense in which he died for them, repentance and faith are required of them in order to their obtaining forgiveness and eternal life. They are agreed, too, that he did not so die for all men that they will all be finally saved, and that he did not die with a determination actually to save all. What point of any consequence then remains, except the one just stated, namely, *whether Christ in any sense whatever died for the whole world.*

For the sake of making the point now under consideration as plain as possible, I shall, for the present, lay aside the word *atonement*, which has become ambiguous, its common use being somewhat different from its use in Scripture; and I shall state the question thus: *Had the death of Christ any respect whatever to the human race generally? Had it any influence — did it produce any effect, and if so, what effect, upon the condition of mankind at large* — upon those who will not be saved, as well as upon those who will be saved? This, I think, frees the question from needless obscurity, and presents it in the clearest light possible. Accordingly, if it appears from the word of God, that the state or condition of the world at large is in any respect different from what it would have been, had not Christ died, — if it appears that his death has had any influence upon the condition of all men; then his death had a real and manifest relation to all men, and, in this respect, he died for all. Is then the condition of the whole world — are the circumstances of human beings universally different in any respect from what they would have been, had there been no death of a Mediator? Has Christ's death had any influence upon the state of the world at large? Those

Digitized by Google

who will submit to be guided by the word of God, and will take pains to think and judge candidly on this subject, will, I apprehend, find no difficulty in admitting the following positions.

1. *The death of Christ had such an influence, that forgiveness and eternal life may be truly and consistently offered to all men.* This offer of salvation is actually made to all by the inspired writers, and is made in a variety of the most explicit declarations. This is fully admitted by those who hold most strictly to a limited atonement, and say that Christ died only for the elect.* Nor do the sacred writers merely offer salvation. They invite and beseech all to whom the gospel comes, to receive the gift of eternal life. Now had there been no Saviour provided, and had the divine administration proceeded directly and only according to the principles of law, there would have been no such proposal of mercy to offenders — no offer of forgiveness and no gracious invitation and entreaty to accept it. We hear of no offer or invitation of this kind to the angels who fell. And no man who soundly believes the general principles of revelation, can suppose that such an offer would ever have been made to fallen men, had it not been for the intervention of a Saviour. Now surely the condition of those transgressors who have this free offer of salvation presented to them, and who are thus invited and entreated to accept it, is widely different from those to whom no such overture is or can be made. And this difference is caused by the mediation of Christ; it is the effect of his expiatory death. Thus far then it is clear, that the death of Christ has

* I am happy to quote here a passage from the Rev. R. S. Candlish, D. D. of Edinburgh, who earnestly maintains the doctrine of a limited atonement. In his recent work on the Atonement he says: "That the death of Christ has a certain reference to all men universally — that it has a certain bearing even upon the lost — we must hold and maintain; because we maintain that it lays the foundation for the offer of the gospel to all men universally, and lays the foundation for that offer being honest and free on the part of God. This could not be, without some sort of relation existing between the death of Christ and every impenitent and unbelieving man who is called to receive the gospel." He does not undertake to explain that relation, only that it is such as to lay a foundation for the gospel offer. See his work on the Atonement, p. 137, 2d edit. Edinburgh, 1845.

Digitized by Google

had an influence upon the condition of all men. And in *this* sense he died for all — that is, he so died for all, that in consequence of his death, the gracious offer of salvation may be and is made to all.

2. *In consequence of Christ's death, any sinners, all sinners, may have eternal life if they will believe, consistently with the perfections of God and the principles of his government.* This is implied in the fact above stated, that salvation is offered to all, and that all are invited to receive it. Who can think it consistent for any king or ruler to make a public offer of forgiveness to offenders, and to send forth a messenger to urge them to accept it, when, after all, that king knows it would be incompatible with his justice and honor, and the good of his kingdom, actually to forgive those to whom the offer is made? Who especially can think such a procedure consistent with the character of God? The free offer he makes of forgiveness to sinners in general most certainly implies, that they may safely and properly have forgiveness, if they will accept it. But how could they be safely and properly forgiven, and how could anything be said or done implying that they may be forgiven, *without the shedding of blood?* Whatever they might do, they could have no exemption from punishment, if Christ had not died. Here, then, is an effect of the death of Christ, which is as extensive as the human race. In consequence of that momentous event, salvation may be offered to sinners *indiscriminately;* and *any sinners* who will comply with the terms proposed, may *consistently* be saved. Those who do comply are saved. Others might, on the same terms, be saved as consistently as they. The *offer* is the *same to all.* The *conditions* of salvation required of all, are also the *same.* From this we conclude, that the principles of the divine government would admit of the salvation of all, *on the same conditions.* The death of Christ, then, must have had a general influence, an influence which respected mankind at large, and which opened the door of mercy for the whole fallen race, and which rendered it as consistent for one sinner to be actually saved, as another, for all as for any, on the same terms. In *this* respect, the death of Christ evidently

Digitized by Google

affected all alike; that is, it put all into a state in which they may obtain salvation, on the terms and in the manner prescribed.

If I rightly understand the teachings of revelation, the death of Christ did then, *in the respect above mentioned*, relate to all men alike. It prepared the way for all, on the same terms, to be forgiven consistently with the honor of God's law. It procured the free offer of salvation for all — *an offer stamped with divine sincerity and truth;* an offer which might consistently and properly, be carried into effect on the terms prescribed. And it rendered it proper, that the messengers of Christ should make the proclamation of mercy to human beings in every place, without distinction, and should invite and entreat them, one as well as another, to receive it.

But this general design of the atonement, and the equal respect, above stated, which it had to the case of sinners universally, does not by any means imply, that all will be treated alike by the providence of God, or that all will share alike in the influence of the Holy Spirit. It does not imply, that the purpose of God respecting the actual bestowment of spiritual blessings, was the same as to all men. The general provision is one thing; the divine influence which disposes men to avail themselves of that provision, is another thing. The first has such an effect upon the condition of men in relation to the violated law and its penalty, that any of them may, in the way pointed out, be consistently pardoned and saved. The other has an effect upon their personal character. It renews their heart, and unites them to Christ by faith. The one, therefore, may be general; the other must be limited and particular, — just as much so as actual salvation is. What I would say on this subject may be summarily expressed thus: The death of Christ, as to its *direct* influence in vindicating the law and justice of God, so far as to open the door of mercy and to procure the offer of forgiveness and eternal life, affects all alike. As to its *application*, or its *actual results*, and as to the design of God in regard to its ultimate efficacy, it has an essentially different respect to those who are given to Christ, and who will be saved, from what it has to others.

Digitized by Google

Thus far I have discussed the subject on the ground of general principles derived from the word of God. But I much prefer a method which is more directly and more obviously Scriptural.

Let us then examine the Bible, and see how this subject is treated there.

First. There are many passages which represent, that a merciful provision is made by Christ for the salvation of *men in general.—for men indiscriminately, and without any limitation, except in the terms on which its blessings are to be enjoyed.* John 3: 16; "God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." No words could more clearly and unequivocally set forth a general measure of divine mercy — an act of God's *love* towards the human race at large. If the expression that "God so loved *the world* that he gave his only begotten Son," leaves any doubt as to the general bearing of the gift, that doubt is removed by the expression which immediately follows, and which teaches the wide reach of the merciful provision. God — "gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." It is as much as to say; if any sinner, whoever he may be, will believe in Christ, he shall be saved. This general act of God's love towards mankind is expressed in various ways in other texts. John 1: 29; "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." It might, as I have before signified, be more properly rendered; *Behold the Lamb of God which maketh expiation for the sin of the world.* The expiation in one respect is general — it has a relation to the world at large, to sinners indiscriminately. The declaration of Christ, John 6: 51, is of the same import; "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if *any man* eat of this bread he shall live forever. And the bread which I will give him is my flesh, which I will give for the life of *the world.*" 2 Cor. 5: 19; "God was in Christ reconciling *the world* unto himself. 1 John 2: 2; "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of *the whole world.*" He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world in *such* a sense,

Digitized by Google

that to *any* sinners and to *all* sinners forgiveness may be freely offered, with the assurance, that they shall actually enjoy the blessings of eternal life, if they will comply with the necessary conditions. 1 John 4: 14; "God sent his Son to be the Saviour of *the world*."

Secondly. *The inspired writers speak familiarly of this work of divine mercy, as actually relating to those who perish, or who may be supposed to perish.* Rom. 14: 15; "Destroy not him with thy meat *for whom Christ died*." 1 Cor. 8: 11; "And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, *for whom Christ died*." Peter speaks of false teachers, who *deny the Lord that bought them*, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 Pet. 2: 1. They are false teachers and bring destruction upon themselves, and a very aggravated destruction, because they denied the Lord that *bought* or *redeemed* them. Is it conceivable that the inspired writers would speak in this manner, if the death of the Redeemer had no relation whatever to those who will finally perish, and produced no effect upon their circumstances?

Thirdly. *It appears irreconcilable with sincerity, for God to offer salvation to perishing sinners, and to invite and command them to accept it, unless Christ so died for them, and so expiated their sins, that they may consistently be saved:* to offer them what was never, in any sense, provided for them — to invite them to receive a gift, which he *could not consistently bestow*, though they should comply with the conditions proposed — to command his servants to go into all the world and proclaim glad tidings to every creature, when there could be *no glad tidings* except to a part.

Thus far as to the provision which God has made by the appointment of a Mediator for the benefit of the world — the human race in a general view. This provision is stated in the Scriptures in various forms, and in language very definite and emphatical. And the inspired writers treat it as a practical truth, that is, they make it the ground of a free offer of forgiveness and eternal life to all men without distinction; which offer

Digitized by Google

they could never have made, had not Christ by his death prepared the way for the free exercise of divine mercy. On this same ground, ministers of the gospel make a proclamation of peace on earth and good will to all men. Wherever they find human beings, they tell them that Christ has died for sin, the just for the unjust, and endeavor to persuade them to come and partake of the blessings which he has procured and offered. They lift up their voice in the name of God and proclaim the glad tidings to men. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life." "Turn ye, for why will ye die?" Wherever we find human beings, we are authorized to make these overtures to them, without knowing or inquiring whether they are elected to salvation or not. And God, who knows who are elected, and who are not, makes these overtures equally to all. "Come, for all things are ready." Such is the general provision — such the influence which Christ's death has upon the circumstances and prospects of this apostate world.

But every general provision is subject to be qualified by specific conditions, or to be otherwise limited. And both the general provision and the qualifying conditions and other limitations, are expressive and equally expressive of the mind of God — the general provision in one point of view, the qualifying conditions and limitations in another point of view. As to the present case, some texts state the general provision made by Christ's death, and also the particular conditions on which that provision will turn to our benefit. Such is the passage John 3 : 16; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, *that whosoever believeth on him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." The provision was *general, for the world;* but the enjoyment of its blessings is limited in the manner specified. There are some texts which represent the general provision only. But all such texts are to be qualified by other texts, which point out the particular limitations. For example. Some texts affirm that Christ gave himself a ransom for all — that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. But these texts must not be taken in the most extensive, absolute sense, as though the Scriptures said

Digitized by Google

nothing else on the subject, but are to be qualified by those which bring into view the particular limitations, such as these: "He that believeth shall be saved." "Let the wicked turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him." "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." You observe that in these texts the particular terms of salvation on man's part are mentioned, without any express reference to the death of Christ, or the provision he made for our salvation. But if we would interpret the Bible justly, we must not derive our opinion from texts of one particular character, to the neglect of other texts relating to the subject, but from all the texts taken together. This connected view of different texts is required by a due reverence for the authority of God's word; and it cannot be neglected by any sincere inquirers after the truth. It is obvious that any other way of handling the subject must expose us to palpable error on the one side or the other.

While then we admit the propitiation for sin to be, in one respect, general; while we admit that the atonement is *all-sufficient*, and without any limitations arising from its own nature; we must still remember, that the actual benefits of that provision are necessarily connected with conditions, and of course limited to those by whom the conditions are performed. If the conditions are neglected, it is certain that the blessings of redemption cannot be enjoyed. It is utterly impossible for sinners to partake of a holy salvation, without holiness of heart; and holiness of heart in this case will operate in the way of repentance and faith. Whatever may be the case, therefore, as to the *sufficiency* of the atonement, and the extent of the propitiation by which salvation was procured and proffered; the actual salvation of any of the human race, even of those who are in the divine counsels destined to enjoy it, must be conditional. They must forsake sin and believe in Christ, or they cannot enjoy happiness in the presence of God. These conditions are not arbitrarily imposed. The nature and circumstances of the case render them indispensably necessary. Requiring men to perform these conditions is in truth only requiring them *to be saved* — it is only requiring them to receive salvation and to enjoy eternal life.

Digitized by Google

I have referred to other limitations besides those which are indicated by the express conditions connected with the general proffer of salvation. The limitations intended are set forth in various passages of Scripture, which plainly teach, that the mission and death of the Mediator had a special reference to the chosen people of God; that Christ died for them in particular — died for them with a gracious and unalterable design to save them — died for them, I may say, *efficaciously*. The following are some of the texts which express this limited and definite designation of the *atonement*, or, more exactly, of *Christ's death*. Isa. 53 : 8 and 11; "For the transgression of *my people* was he stricken." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Matt. 1 : 21; "He shall save *his* people from their sins." Acts 20 : 28; "To feed *the church* of God, which he purchased with his own blood." Ephes. 5 : 25; "Christ also loved *the church*, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it." John 10 : 11, 15; "I am the good shepherd. — The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." — "I lay down my life for the sheep." Tit. 2 : 14; "Who gave himself for *us*, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Rom. 5 : 8; "But God commendeth his love towards *us*, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for *us*." Rom. 8 : 32; "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for *us* all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." 1 John 4 : 10; "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved *us*, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The words *we*, *us* and *our* in these passages are very evidently used not with reference to mankind at large, but with a special and restricted reference to those who are saved. The writer is speaking to and of believers.

Now it seems to me evident, that this special and restricted reference or designation of Christ's death is perfectly consistent with the general design and influence of it, as above explained. Nor is there anything singular in such a two-fold sense of the same word or phrase. Take for example the expression, *God loves the*

Digitized by Google

world. There is abundant evidence that he does love all and every one of the human race; that he has true benevolence towards them; that he takes pleasure not in their misery, but in their happiness; and that when we have a hearty love and kindness towards all men, we do but imitate, in a humble measure, the unbounded goodness of our heavenly Father. He truly *loves* all men. But he loves the *elect*, those whom "he has chosen to salvation," in a *special manner*. His love towards them has in it a purpose to give them eternal life. He loves them *efficaciously* and *savingly*. Now surely this love of God to those whom he has given to Christ as his peculiar people, is none the less special and discriminating, and none the less precious, and none the less certainly productive of saving good to their souls, because he truly loves the whole human race, though not with the same special and gracious purpose. In like manner, Christ's dying or making atonement for his chosen people *specially*, and *with a gracious purpose to save them*, does not interfere in the least with his dying in a general sense for the whole world, and thus laying a foundation for the offer of salvation to all, and opening wide the door of mercy, so that whosoever will may enter in and be saved.

The views which have been taken of this subject, will help us at once to see the utter fallacy of the argument, by which men sometimes attempt to prove universal salvation. One class of Universalists urge in defence of their scheme that Christ died for all—was a ransom for all, etc., and that this design and extent of the atonement imply that all men will actually be saved.

To expose the inconclusiveness of this argument, it is only necessary to consider the Scripture representations which have already been noticed. The substance of what they reveal is, that God has given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might be saved; that Christ so died for all, that all may have the offer of salvation, and may actually be saved, if they will repent and believe. These conditions are as real as the general provision, and are always to be taken in connection with it. Of course the general provision can avail nothing as to individuals, except where the conditions are, through divine grace, actually

Digitized by Google

fulfilled. If then we would determine whether all men are to be saved, we must determine whether all men repent and believe. For, according to the word of God, it is as true, as it would be if there had been no atonement, that the impenitent and unholy shall perish. Just as it is in the natural world. Although God has provided the sun to enlighten the world; if any man should choose to live in a dark dungeon, he would fail to enjoy the advantages of the light. And although God has provided an abundance of water, if any man should refuse to drink, he would die of thirst. The Scripture representations imply the same thing, as to the general provision which God has made for the spiritual welfare of men, and as to the way, and the only way, in which we are to secure the benefits of that provision to ourselves. A rich man provides a great supper, and invites many to come and partake. But those who refuse to comply with the invitation, lose the benefits of the general provision and the general invitation. A man entrusts his servants with various talents; but none can enjoy his approbation, except those who make a right use of the talents. In other places, the Scriptures lay aside metaphors and allegories, and teach plainly, that although Christ has, in an important sense, died for all, and made propitiation for the sins of the world, sinners cannot be saved unless they repent — that they cannot escape, if they neglect so great salvation. It is perfectly clear then, from the word of God, that the salvation of all men cannot by any means be inferred from the extent and all-sufficiency of the provision made by the death of Christ, or from the unlimited offers of the Gospel, and that it can be proved in no other way, than by proving that all men do actually repent and believe. Just so far as there is a want of evidence that all men are penitent and holy, there is want of evidence that all will be saved. And if we have reason, either from the Bible or from a knowledge of facts, to conclude that any of the human race live and die impenitent, we have just so much reason to conclude, that they will fail to enjoy the benefits of Christ's death. For Christ died for all in such a sense only, that whosoever believeth on him shall have eternal life. There is no evidence from the Scriptures, taken as a whole,

Digitized by Google

that Christ died with a purpose or expectation actually to save all. But there is abundant evidence to the contrary. The fault of Universalists is, that they infer from a few passages, pressed to an extreme construction, a doctrine which is plainly contradictory to the general current of Scripture, and which is by no means warranted even by the passages on which they rely. Their opinion is nothing but conjecture, and it is a conjecture totally irreconcilable with facts, and with the obvious, practical teachings of revelation.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXXII.

REMARKS ON THE CONTROVERSY RESPECTING THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT, AS CONDUCTED BY THE TWO PARTIES.

FROM the remarks which I shall now offer, it will, I hope, be made to appear, that, notwithstanding the difference in phraseology and the manner of reasoning, there is in fact a substantial agreement among evangelical Christians as to all points of consequence respecting the atonement; that, if the parties are to continue the dispute, they ought to take pains to determine beforehand, what they are to dispute about; and that, if both parties will endeavor to promote union among the followers of Christ by exerting that measure of pacific influence which they may do consistently with Christian fidelity, the way will soon be prepared to drop the controversy altogether, and thus to save for other and more important objects, the time and strength which would otherwise be spent in strife.

There are two recent and well-known writers, Symington and Jenkyn, who may properly enough be taken as representatives of the two parties that have been engaged in this controversy. These authors are highly respectable, and they lay before us very clearly the amount of what has been said on both sides of the question at issue.

Symington thinks proper, as many others do, to use the phrase, *Christ died for us*, as including not only the general provision of divine blessings, but the design of Christ actually to bestow them; as

Digitized by Google

not only opening the door of mercy, but designing to bring those for whom he died, actually to come in at that door. Thus the author holds that Christ died for those only, who are chosen to salvation, and who will actually be saved. And he uses the word atonement in the same limited sense. He carries along with him the literal meaning of the original word, translated atonement, in Rom. 5 : 11; "By whom we have now received *reconciliation*." So the translators render the word in the preceding verse: "For if while we were enemies we were *reconciled* to God, (*κατηλλάγημεν*) by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled (*καταλλαγέντες*) we shall be saved through him." This reconciliation is by the death of Christ. It is a reconciliation which believers have actually received. A derivative of the word is used in the same sense, 2 Cor. 5 : 18, 19; "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself (*καταλλάξαντος*), and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation (*καταλλαγῆς*); to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This primary sense of the word is regarded by Symington as a conclusive argument in favor of the doctrine of a limited atonement, the doctrine that Christ died only for the elect.

Now what I have to remark, is this; that if the word atonement is understood exactly in the sense in which it is used in Rom. 5 : 11, and in the sense in which the same word in the original is used in other places, where it means actual reconciliation, such as believers have experienced; then, of course, it is limited to those who are thus reconciled. And it is evident that Symington understands other expressions, such as, *Christ died for our sins — died for us — is the propitiation for our sins*, etc., as denoting that influence of his death, which is effectual to salvation. The sense in which he employs the words makes a limitation necessary. But it is nothing uncommon that a word, which ordinarily denotes a particular thing which is accomplished, is used to denote the *means* of its accomplishment. So the word *καταλλαγὴ*, reconciling, is used in Rom. 11 : 15. The casting away of the Jews is said to be the reconciling of the world, — that is, the means of reconciling the world. And why may we not use the word atone-

Digitized by Google

ment in theological discourse, in the same way, that is to signify the *means* of reconciling us to God, namely, the death of Christ? And why may we not consider his death as having a relation to all those, whose condition was in any important respect favorably affected by his death? And why may we not properly say, in that respect he died for all men, leaving it to other texts to determine how far the saving efficacy of his death extended? And why may we not hence come to this conclusion, that Christ in a more general though very important respect, died for the whole family of man, but that he died for his chosen people in a definite and peculiar sense? This manner of speaking would convey the idea intended in a manner which is just and intelligible, and which is frequent in other matters. The use of terms in different senses is rendered necessary by the poverty of language. You will find it impossible to discourse freely on any important subject, without giving different meanings, or different shades of meaning, to the same words and expressions. And if it is asked how we can on this principle be sure of rightly understanding the sacred writers, the answer is, that intelligent, candid men will easily discover their meaning from the general current of their thoughts, and the drift of their discourse; from the nature of the subject, and from what they say of it in other ways. Accordingly, when they declare at one time, that Christ died for the whole world, or made propitiation for the sins of the world, and at another time, that he laid down his life for his sheep, that is, his chosen people, we are under no necessity of making out, that the world means only his chosen people in every part of the world, and that the two expressions are not only to be applied to the same subject, but that they mean precisely the same thing. So far as the language and the consistency of the writers are concerned, we may just as well consider the first expression as relating to all human beings without distinction, and the last, as relating to those who will be saved; the first implying, that he died for all men in one respect, the latter, that he died for those who will be saved in another and special respect. No reason can arise against such an interpretation of the language used in the first case, from the

Digitized by Google

doctrine of election, or the doctrine that Christ died for his own people in a special sense. Nor is this interpretation any departure from good usage. The general principles of philology will fairly admit of it. I say then, that Symington and those who agree with him, have in reality no occasion to object to the position, that Christ, in a certain sense, died for all men. For they may hold just what they mean by a definite or limited atonement, and yet may consistently admit, that he died for all men in another and more general sense. They may hold that the death of Christ had that peculiar relation to the elect which their doctrine implies, and yet may consistently admit, that it had a relation of another kind to the whole world. And is not this the view, and the only view, which fairly agrees with the various representations of the Bible taken together? If those who believe the doctrine of a limited or definite atonement should come into this view of the subject, as I apprehend they may consistently, they would not feel it necessary to put an unnatural and forced sense upon the various texts which teach that Christ died for all men. Their doctrine, maintained with Christian candor, would perfectly harmonize with the doctrine for which I have contended, as to the bearing of Christ's death upon the whole human race. I am thus led to think that there is no need of any controversy on this subject among those who embrace the great doctrines of the gospel on other subjects.

But I must further and very particularly remark, that Symington himself really admits all that we mean by the doctrine, that Christ, in an important sense, died for all men, — commonly called the doctrine of a general atonement.

Our doctrine is precisely this, that Christ's death had such a relation to the whole human race, that eternal life may be offered to all; that the door of mercy is opened to all; that all may be invited to believe in Christ; and that whosoever believeth in him shall, on the ground of his expiatory sacrifice, be pardoned and saved. We mean that Christ's death had this most important influence upon the human race at large, — upon the non-elect as well as the elect. The day of salvation is given to all who hear

Digitized by Google

the gospel. Pardon is offered to all alike. Opportunity to be saved is, under the gospel dispensation, afforded to all alike; so that now, where revelation is enjoyed, those who perish will perish not merely because they have transgressed the moral law, but because they refuse the salvation provided and offered.

Now Symington, and others who embrace his opinions, do really admit and maintain all this. Symington says; "We hold that the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus possessed an *intrinsic value sufficient for the salvation of the whole world.* In this sense, it was adequate to the redemption of every human being." "The worth of Christ's atonement," he says, "we hold to be, in the strictest sense of the term, *infinite, absolute, all-sufficient.*" "We regard the atonement of Christ as sufficient for all. *This all-sufficiency is what lays the foundation for the unrestricted universality of the gospel call.* And from every such view of the atonement, as would imply that it was not sufficient for all, or that there was not an *ample warrant* in the invitations of the gospel for all to look to it for salvation, we utterly dissent." Symington adopts the following language of Wardlaw: "Such is my impression of the sufficiency of the atonement, that were all the guilt of all mankind concentrated in my own person, I should see no reason, relying on that blood which cleanseth from all sin, to indulge despair."

The following expressions of Symington show still more clearly what his views are. "It is not said in the gospel that Christ died with the intention that all should be saved, but that his atonement is a *sufficient ground of salvation to all*, and that all who rest on this ground by faith shall be saved." "The atonement of Christ being sufficient for all, is with propriety made known and offered to the acceptance of all." "*A sufficient ground of salvation exists; the appropriate means of salvation are provided.*" And the reason why men perish in their sins *is not, in any sense, because Christ did not die for them, but because they would not avail themselves of the merits of his death.*" He says, too, that "the free, full, unhampered proclamation of mercy to all men proceeds on this ground,—that it derives all its consistency and power from the perfect, all-sufficient atonement of Christ."

Digitized by Google

It will be seen that in these and other passages, Symington asserts the very thing intended by those who hold to the doctrine that Christ died for all men. And it will be difficult to find in their writings any stronger or more unequivocal expressions than what are found in the work of this excellent author, of the sufficiency of the atonement for the salvation of all men, the abundant provision which was made by the death of Christ for the eternal life of all who will accept it, and the obligation of all who hear the gospel to receive Christ as their Saviour. Nor do those who advocate an unlimited atonement declare more explicitly than Symington, that unbelievers will perish, not because Christ did not die for them, but because they reject Christ and refuse his offered salvation. In short, the practical treatment which both parties give to this part of the subject is, in all important points, the same. Both parties tell sinners in the same language, that by the death of Christ the door of mercy is open for them; that salvation is freely and sincerely offered; that whosoever will may come and take of the water of life; that the merit of Christ's death is infinite and all-sufficient; that they all have a full warrant to believe in him; and that if any of them, even the chief of sinners, perish, it will be because they would not believe. The advocates of a definite or limited atonement are, in their feelings and in their preaching, as far as any others from circumscribing the value or sufficiency of the atonement, and from denying or concealing the fact, that Christ's death had this real and momentous effect upon all men, namely, that it secured to them the offer of a free and full salvation, and made it proper that we should invite and beseech all alike, the non-elect as well as the elect, to come to him that they may have life.

This being the case, an important question arises, namely, what is still wanting in order to the salvation of all sinners now living, if they should repent? As the atonement is of infinite worth, and is allowed to be sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, can anything more be necessary in the way of atonement? Suppose it were the design of God, (I make the supposition for the sake of illustrating the principle concerned, as Paul did, Gal.

Digitized by Google

1 : 8,) suppose it to be God's gracious design to save all the non-elect population of the earth, would a new atoning sacrifice be required on their account? Would it be necessary that the Son of God should again suffer and die for their sins, in their stead, and that in a manner essentially different from the manner in which he died before? And if so, then how can it be said that the atonement already made is *sufficient* for all? As God has given the free offer of salvation to all on the ground of the atonement which Christ has made, might he not also give his Spirit to work repentance and faith in them on the same ground? Might not the blood of the cross operate in this way, as well as in the other? In a word, would not the atonement, just as it is, be all that would be called for in order to the salvation of any sinners on earth, if they should repent and believe? Or would it, after all, be indispensable that atoning blood should be again shed, and shed for them in a new and special sense, before they could be saved? Is it indeed true, notwithstanding the free offer of mercy to them, that, if they should believe in Christ, as they are commanded to do, the want of a sufficient atonement would still stand in the way of their eternal life? And if so, then would not honesty and truth require that this important circumstance should be plainly announced, and that, in the universal offer of salvation which we make to sinners, we should distinctly declare that, although we present to them the gracious proposals of the gospel, and tell them, without distinction, that if they will accept those proposals, they shall have everlasting life, it is still true of all the non-elect, that if they *should* accept they could not be saved, inasmuch as Christ had not died for their sins, and had made no atonement for them? But if this principle should be proclaimed by the ambassadors of Christ, it would tend directly to neutralize their message; and sinners, unless they could somehow think themselves of the number of the elect, would feel that they were mocked by the offers of mercy, seeing they could not be saved even if they should accept those offers.

To accomplish my object, I shall now proceed to show that the advocates of a general atonement hold to the very limitations,

Digitized by Google

which are asserted by the advocates of a particular or limited atonement. While they maintain that Christ died for all men, they also maintain that it was the divine purpose to bestow the blessings procured by his death on a part only. Symington expressly mentions this as the main point of the controversy. He says the question between the two parties "hinges solely on *the divine intention respecting the subjects of the atonement, or what is called the destination of Christ's death.*" And then he proceeds to support his views respecting the atonement by the special and immutable purpose of God respecting the subjects of salvation. He says "if God in the matter of salvation acts according to design, and it so happens that salvation is limited in its application to some, does it not follow that it was the design of God that it should be limited?" Again he says, "As God cannot fail in any of his designs, the actual effect shows us the *extent* of the *designed* effect." "And as the effects of atonement, namely, *redemption*, *reconciliation*, and *glory* extend only to some, *we are bound to apply to the atonement itself a similar restriction in the designed extent of its subjects.*" The ablest advocates of a general atonement hold strongly to the same restriction in the designed application of it. So that it is with very good reason that Symington suggests, that the difference is more in words than in opinion. I might name to you a great number of divines of high reputation, both here and abroad, who hold to the doctrine that Christ died for all men, and yet maintain that it is the divine purpose to make his death effectual to the salvation of only a part; that the atonement, as to sufficiency, is without limits, that it opened the door for the salvation of all men; but as to the design of God in regard to its saving application, it is limited.

This limitation is much insisted on by Jenkyn, the other writer whom I mentioned above; an author of great ingenuity and force, not at all biassed in favor of a rigid orthodoxy, and quite enough inclined to maintain high notions of man's freedom, agency and ability. In his book on the Atonement, he contends very earnestly for the doctrine that Christ died for all men. But as to the designed application of the atonement in the salvation of the

Digitized by Google

people of God, he expresses himself with as much decision as Symington, or any other Calvinist. "It is," he says, "an awful fact, that unless God will sovereignly exercise his gracious influence on the hearts of men, not one — will ever avail himself of the benefits of the atonement, and consequently no flesh can be saved." Again he says; "All mankind are of themselves so opposed to the designs of the mediation of Christ, and so inclined to persevere in sin, that unless God, in his sovereign will, exercise his influence in special and personal cases, no one of all the human race will ever be saved." "For it is in the physical and moral constitution of the nature of man, that what he is unwilling to do, he never will do. Hence the Scriptures speak of that, of which a man is unwilling to do, as a thing impossible to come to pass. When Christ charges the Jews with this unwillingness, he represents their coming to him as impossible." "Ye will not come unto me;" — and "no man can come unto me unless the Father draw him." He says, past ages "do not furnish one instance of a man, who has ascribed his conversion to his own agency and goodness of heart." "The cases are innumerable, in which the best means have been used in vain. * * Yet among men of the same character, means, apparently less likely to succeed, have prospered mightily." He proceeds to say; "On any other principle than the sovereign application of divine influences, it is impossible to account for the conversion of man. The theory of "common grace' will not account for it; for it leaves the question behind — how comes one man more than another, to make a right use of this common grace? The self-determining power of the will will not account for it, for there is no such thing. A will, not determined by motives, is not the will of an intelligent, accountable being." "God alone changes the heart. And he has a sovereign, independent right to impart divine influences in what degree and on whomsoever he pleases, according to the counsel of his own will." Jenkyn says, the total failure of the atonement "would not have been effectually prevented by leaving it entirely to the liberty of free agents; for in such hands the failure would have been entire and total." "Nothing can pre-

Digitized by Google

vent this failure, but the determination of God to impart sovereign influences to make some differ from others, and to give unto them, for the sake of Christ, to believe in him." "The Lord Jesus was deeply interested in the subject. It was by the exercise of this sovereignty that he was to see of the travail of his soul. He never thought that his harvest would have been larger, if it had been left to the self-determining sovereignty of the human will. He regarded it as more sure in the hands of his Father. Divine sovereignty settles every jewel in the mediatorial diadem." I give one more quotation. The instances of the actual success of the atonement "are not," he says, "matters of chance, — they are the result of a definite purpose, and of an adjusted plan settled in eternity. God will direct that — the atonement shall infallibly issue in the personal salvation of a multitude which no man can number." "JESUS CHRIST KNEW THESE DEFINITELY AND PERSONALLY, AND HAD A DIRECT AND SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THEM IN HIS SUFFERINGS AND DEATH."

The quotations which I made from Symington are sufficient to show, that although he strenuously maintains the doctrine of a definite and limited atonement, hemaintains also that Christ by his death actually made a general provision for the exercise of mercy to the human race on specified conditions, and prepared the way for an unlimited offer of pardon to sinners in every part of the earth, whether elect or non-elect. He asserts this general, unlimited provision as explicitly and emphatically, as any advocates of a general atonement. And the quotations from Jenkyn show, that he decidedly maintains the doctrine of election, that is, that it was the sovereign purpose of God to render the death of Christ effectual to the salvation of only a limited number; — or, to express it in another manner, that the death of Christ, or the atonement he made, *as to its designed and saving efficacy*, was limited and definite. Jenkyn and the most respectable advocates of a general atonement maintain all this as fully, as the advocates of a particular atonement.

You may now ask what difference there can be between the two parties, if both really hold to the same doctrines. To this I

Digitized by Google

reply, that, notwithstanding the substantial agreement which appears, there is a real and not unimportant difference between them in the following respects.

First; *as to the use of terms.* The advocates of a general atonement make use of the phrase, Christ died for sinners, or made atonement for the world, to denote that general work of Christ and that offer of salvation, respecting which the parties agree. But the advocates of a definite and limited atonement use the same phrase to point out not only the atoning merit of Christ's death, which they allow to be sufficient for all, but his purpose to bestow the benefits of it upon the elect. Accordingly if you propose the question, whether Christ died for all; one party answers it in the affirmative, the other in the negative. Ask whether Christ made atonement for all, or only for a part; one party answers, for all, the other, only for a part. And they answer thus differently, merely because they attach different meanings to the same words and phrases, and not, as it seems to me, because they differ materially in the ideas they entertain. For if you lay aside the particular words and phrases, which they use in different senses, and make use of others which they cannot but understand alike, you will find that no substantial difference remains. The difference then is in words, rather than in belief; or to say the least, the difference is in words far more than in belief.

If you inquire, which party uses the words and phrases referred to most correctly; my answer is, that one party adopts what appears to me to be the Scriptural and correct usage in some instances, and the other party, in other instances. The sacred writers seem often to speak of Christ's dying for all in order to denote the *general provision* he made. And in regard to such cases, the advocates of a general atonement do, as I think, conform to Scripture usage. But in other cases, the Scriptures speak of Christ's dying in *a special sense for those who will actually be saved;* that is, they use the expression with a particular and limited meaning, implying the designed application of the atonement, or the designation of Christ's death;

Digitized by Google

and in regard to such cases, the advocates of a definite and limited atonement conform to Scripture usage. In this, as in many other instances, Scripture usage evidently varies. The sacred writers sometimes use the expression, Christ died, or made expiation, in the larger sense, and sometimes in the definite, limited sense. It follows, then, that we shall most perfectly follow the free and artless manner of the sacred writers, if we speak of Christ's dying for men, sometimes in the large and general sense, and sometimes in the special and restricted sense, while our exact meaning in each case is to be made evident by circumstances, or, if necessary, by particular explanations.

I have already noticed, that the word atonement is used in our version only twice in the New Testament. First, in Rom. 5: 11, by whom we have received the atonement (καταλλαγὴν), reconciliation, that is, restoration to the divine favor. Here atonement evidently means the special blessings, which believers actually receive, through the death of the Mediator. Of course the atonement as here spoken of, must be definite and limited. And when Symington and others speak of the atonement as limited, their language is plainly conformed to the example of the Apostle in this passage. And this is the only place in the New Testament where the word atonement is used in relation to this subject. The verb, καταλλασσω, is generally used in the New Testament in a sense equally special and restricted. Those, therefore, who speak of the atonement as general and unlimited, use the word atonement in a sense obviously different from the sense of the original in the passages referred to.

In regard to the other words employed in the New Testament, or in common religious discourse, in relation to the work of Christ, as that he died for the sins of men, made propitiation, expiation, etc., they evidently admit of being used both in a more *general* and in a more *definite* sense. And if men would exercise the same intelligence and candor here, as they do in cases where there is no controversy, this variety of meanings would occasion no great difficulty. But if one party insist upon it, that the words and phrases above mentioned shall be used invariably and

Digitized by Google

exclusively in one sense, and the other party insist that they shall be used exclusively in another sense; then controversy ensues; and the controversy, which at the outset is a war of words, will in its progress produce real differences of opinion. Or if the opinions of the two parties continue to be substantially the same, still the *appearance* of a difference, occasioned by such a different use of words, will be followed by many of the unhappy consequences of a real difference.

But secondly; *there is a disagreement between the two parties, as to the comparative importance of the different portions of truth which appertain to the subject.*

Men of one party give great prominence to the special design of Christ's death in regard to those who are chosen to salvation. They delight to dwell upon the eternal love of God, and his purpose actually to save sinners; upon his grace in renewing and justifying them; upon the special influence of his Spirit in giving them repentance and faith; upon his faithfulness towards them, and his unchangeable determination to restore them to his image, and to train them up for heaven; and upon their dependence on his sovereign grace for the whole of salvation. They neither deny nor overlook the goodness of God in providing a Saviour for the world, and offering him to all sinners, and inviting them to believe in him. They do not overlook the opportunity which sinners have to obtain eternal life, nor the powerful motives which urge them to accept offered mercy, nor their high obligations to comply with the conditions of eternal life, nor their utter inexcusableness if they neglect the great salvation and perish in unbelief. I say they do not either deny or overlook these gospel truths. They acknowledge and exhibit them. But in general they do not make them prominent. They do not declare them in all their fulness. They do not take pains to present them in a clear and strong light, *lest they should supersede or overshadow those doctrines which they regard as preëminently important.* These remarks are specially applicable to the preaching and the writings of those who lean towards Antinomian sentiments.

Digitized by Google

The other party take ground which is in some respects the reverse of this. They give the greatest prominence to those parts of divine truth, which others comparatively disregard. They insist often and earnestly upon man's endowments as a free moral, accountable agent, and a proper subject of divine law, and upon his perfect obligation to obey; upon the expansive benevolence of God, and the general and full provision he has made, by the death of Christ, for the salvation of the whole world; upon the free and sincere offer of pardon, the power and willingness of Christ to save, the all-sufficiency of his atonement, and the guilt and inexcusableness of those who continue in unbelief. But as to those particular truths, which the other party regard as preëminently important, — they generally keep them in the back ground, and often make the impression that they do not believe them. You will seldom hear them speak, in a truly Scriptural manner, of the doctrine of election, of God's having mercy on whom he will have mercy, of his having given a people to Christ to be saved through his death, of the deep depravity of our moral nature, of the utter ruin and helplessness of sinners, and their dependence on divine grace for the beginning and continuance of holiness. They do not reject these doctrines; but they generally keep them out of sight. And when they mention them, they do it, not directly to establish and inculcate them, but rather in the way of *concession*. They appear to be reluctant to bring them clearly into view, lest they should interfere with that class of truths, to which they attach so much more importance. In short, they make Christianity consist chiefly of their favorite doctrines. When they allow the other truths some place in their system, it is a very subordinate place. And they appear sometimes to do even that, rather to vindicate their claim to orthodoxy, than from any strong impulse of the heart.

The foregoing remarks do, I think, truly exhibit the general features of the two parties described; though they are applicable to individuals belonging to the parties in very different degrees. Accordingly one of these parties generally and very naturally adopt Symington and others agreeing with him, as favorite

Digitized by Google

authors; while the other party adopt Jenkyn. And these two authors show you the general forms and aspects of the two systems in regard to the atonement and other related subjects.

I cannot quit the subject without suggesting a few things in the way of free and affectionate counsel to those who are candidates for the sacred office.

Guard then against overrating the comparative importance of particular portions of divine truth, and underrating the importance of others. We are not in danger of overrating the real, intrinsic importance of any of the truths of religion, as they are in themselves. But we may overrate their importance comparatively; and we may really as well as comparatively, undervalue other truths. Now a wrong judgment as to the value of different divine truths, is error, and, if acted out, will have the influence of error. It is like a portraiture of a man's face which is false because it makes some of the features too large and prominent, and others too small. If you would avoid this error, you must learn the truths of religion chiefly from the word of God. Neglect not other means of knowledge, but rely principally on that book which is infallible. When you speak of any portion of divine truth, do as the sacred writers do — declare it freely and earnestly, maintain it and enforce it with all your heart, and show that you decidedly hold it, as a part of the counsel of God. For example; hold forth the depraved and lost state of man by nature, as the inspired writers do, — not hesitatingly, or circuitously, and with a studied smoothness or reserve, but seriously, freely and earnestly; and let it appear, that your own heart has been penetrated with it. Hold forth God's eternal purpose to save a part of our race and his sovereign mercy in their effectual calling, as the Scriptures do. Repeat freely those passages of the Bible, which most plainly teach the doctrine. Speak unreservedly of the eternal purpose of God, of election, of those whom the Father has given to Christ, of his having mercy on whom he will have mercy, of salvation by grace, etc. And have no more fear than the apostles had, that this portion of truth will interfere with our moral, accountable agency, or with Christ's willingness to save, or

Digitized by Google

with any other truth. And when you come to the other part of evangelical truth, still copy the inspired writers. Declare unhesitatingly and earnestly, that God sent his Son to die for mankind, to make propitiation for the sins of the whole world, that there is in Christ an abounding of grace, an all-sufficiency for the salvation of a fallen world; and that whosoever will, may come and take of the water of life freely. And never fear that a full declaration of these truths will displace the doctrine of election, or the special design of the atonement in regard to the elect. And when you call upon sinners to repent and accept of salvation, do it heartily and zealously; urge it as a most necessary and reasonable duty, — the duty which a holy God requires sinners to perform, and on which their eternal salvation depends. And never be troubled with any fear, that, by thus earnestly inculcating upon sinners the work which God commands them to perform, you will interfere with the doctrine of the special and sovereign influence of the Spirit in the renewal of the heart. And learn from the example of Christ and the apostles, that no particular labor of yours is called for to reconcile these different portions of divine truth with one another. Christ and the apostles never labored for this; and there was no occasion for their doing it. God has so formed the mind, that, when it is in any good measure in a right state, it will of itself work out a reconciliation among the different truths of revelation. Though in speculative reasoning there may be difficulties and apparent inconsistencies; there will be none in right moral feeling. The effect which a good man will experience in his own mind from each divine truth, will harmonise with the effect of every other truth. All the truths of the gospel, received into the heart, will work there consistently, and produce a united result in the sanctification of the whole man. Our intelligent and moral nature really demands every part of divine truth, and we suffer loss if any part is withheld. The neglect of any important truths will be likely to produce a real interference and jargon, which might be effectually prevented by the appropriate influence of the whole system of truth rightly apprehended. And your experience will show, that the more

Digitized by Google

fully all parts of divine truth are held forth and received, the more consistency will there be in the effect produced in the sanctified mind. A partial, defective exhibition of the various doctrines of revelation tends to an unharmonious result. Inconsistencies spring up from the very fact, that some of the truths of the gospel are kept back, while other truths, being left alone, act upon us with difficulty and irregularity. The very circumstance, which may be intended to prevent inconsistency, occasions it. We do most for the glory of God, the harmony of divine truth, and the sanctification of believers, when we faithfully and fully declare all the doctrines of God's word, and leave it to the Holy Spirit and the illuminated heart to show their consistency with each other.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXXIII.

REMARKS ON THE VIEWS OF COLERIDGE RESPECTING THE DEATH OF CHRIST.*

COLERIDGE objects to the doctrine of redemption as held by the orthodox, that it gives a literal sense to the language employed on the subject of the sacred writers. He mentions four principal metaphors, by which the Apostle Paul illustrates the subject. 1. Those derived from sin-offerings under the former dispensation. 2. Those which speak of reconciliation or atonement. 3. Those which speak of ransom. 4. Those which speak of the payment of a debt.

Coleridge is mistaken in supposing that orthodox divines generally have understood the language of the Apostle in these instances in a strictly literal sense. There are indeed some distinguished writers, who seem to have a leaning to the literal sense, and who ground their arguments and conclusions more or less upon the assumption, that such is the true sense. Now so far as writers have committed any mistake in this way, I would join with Coleridge in opposing it, and in discarding the consequences which flow from it. He rightly represents the work of redemption and the blessings resulting from it, as spiritual things, which are to be spiritually discerned. But he says, "such being the means and effects of our redemption, well might the Apostle associate it with whatever was eminently dear and precious to

* See Aids to Reflection. Burlington Edit. 1840. pp. 286—316, and elsewhere.

Digitized by Google

erring mortals." And he proceeds to illustrate the benefits of the redemptive act, by the benefits secured to the Israelites by their sacrifices of atonement; by the ransom of a slave from captivity; by the reconciliation of a friend who had been offended; and by the payment of a debt. To this no one can object. What then is there exceptionable in the views which this author has taken of the subject? So far as I can gather his meaning from what he has written on the subject, he is faulty chiefly in two respects; first, in regard to that which is the cause, means or ground of our redemption. Here he fails of bringing out clearly to view that which the Scriptures represent as the grand expedient, the ground work of human salvation. Secondly, in regard to the effects produced or the blessings secured by the Redeemer. Here he covers over a part of that which the Scriptures make very prominent. While the sacred writers set forth two great and comprehensive blessings, that is, forgiveness and sanctification, he has his eye upon one only, that is, sanctification.

In his synopsis of the constituent points in the doctrine of redemption, he presents four questions, with correspondent answers.

"1. Who is the agens causator, the agent who is the personal cause or author of redemption?

2. What is the actus causativus, the causative act?

3. What is the effectum causatum, the effect caused?

4. What are the consequentia ab effecto, the consequences arising from the effect?"

The personal agent, who is the cause or author of redemption, he holds, in common with all evangelical Christians, to be "the eternal word, the Son of God, incarnate, tempted, agonizing, crucified, submitting to death, rising from the dead, ascending, and obtaining for his people the descent and communion of the Holy Spirit."

"The causative act," he says, "is a spiritual mystery that passeth all understanding."

"The effect caused," he says, "is being born anew — as

Digitized by Google

before in the flesh to the world, so now born in the spirit to Christ."

"The consequences arising from the effect," he says, "are sanctification from sin, and liberation from the inherent and penal consequences of sin in the world to come, with all the means and processes of sanctification by the word and the Spirit."

As the author expressly designs his discussion of the subject for learned readers and professional students of theology, his answers to these four questions should have an exact logical correctness. But is this the case? Under the first head, the personal cause, he includes not only a description of Christ's personal character as the Son of God, the incarnate word, but also his suffering and dying, his rising again, and giving his Spirit. But these last evidently belong to the second head, the causative act. For where will you find the act, which is preëminently the cause or ground of redemption, except in the death and resurrection of Christ, and in the communication of his Spirit? In an argument which professes to be so exact and scientific, who would expect to find two distinct topics thus confounded? The two topics are the agent, or personal cause, and the causative act. These he first states as distinct topics, the first, and the second. But in describing the first, he includes the act or acts which are specially and preëminently causative in the work of redemption.

But what does he give under the second head, as the causative act? Just this, — "a spiritual and transcendent mystery, that passeth all understanding." But how does this describe the causative act? And how does this distinguish the second topic from the first? Is not the co-eternal word a transcendent mystery? Is not the incarnation, and death, and resurrection of Christ a spiritual and transcendent mystery? This is the very thing the Apostle describes as the great mystery of godliness. And are there not many other mysteries? Is not the eternal existence of God a mystery? Are not all his perfections mysteries? What advance then does our author make under the second head, where he professedly undertakes to answer the question, what is the "actus causativus?" He says it is *a mystery*.

Digitized by Google

So is "the personal cause" which constitutes the first head. So in truth is the third point, the effect caused. So also are the consequences from the effect, under the fourth head. The four points are all mysteries. How then, I ask, does he say anything to distinguish the second head from any of the others? In answering the first question, who or what is the personal cause, he might just as well say, it is a transcendent mystery, and stop there. And the same in answering the third and fourth. And thus, on the principle of the second answer, all the four answers might have stood thus:

1. Who or what is the agens causator? Answer; a transcendent mystery. 2. What is the actus causativus? Answer, just as he gives it; a transcendent mystery. 3. What is the effectum causatum? Answer; a transcendent mystery. 4. What are the consequentia ab effecto? Answer; a transcendent mystery.

But we must examine these points farther. The third point, "the effect caused," he says, is "being born anew," which is commonly called regeneration. Here we come to the peculiar opinion of Coleridge, in which he seems to agree substantially with John Taylor and the Unitarians, who regard the principal and specific design of Christ's death to be man's repentance and reformation. This view of the subject conflicts with all the creeds of evangelical churches, and not less with the teachings of the inspired writers. If any one point can be clearly and emphatically made out to be a doctrine of revelation, it is, that Christ died as a propitiatory sacrifice, to procure the forgiveness of sin. A multitude of passages cited in previous Lectures show, that our forgiveness stands in the closest connection with the sacrifice of Christ, or the blood he shed on the cross; that Christ's dying for us was preëminently the ground of our pardon and justification; that he was set forth as a propitiation, for the forgiveness of sin; not indeed exclusively, but specially, for this purpose. No blessing is represented as having so near a relation to the sufferings of Christ, as this. The Apostle says he delivered us from the curse of the law, that is, its penalty. How? He does not say by

Digitized by Google

bringing us to repentance, or by making us holy, but by being made a curse for us. But I shall touch upon this point again.

Our author says, the effect of the causative act in redemption is, being born anew. This is his third point. Then in the fourth place, he says, the consequences from this effect are, "sanctification from sin and liberation from the inherent and penal consequences of sin." The consequence of being born anew is "sanctification from sin." But what is being born anew, but sanctification begun? Is not the man who is born anew, sanctified, that is, made holy? It would, I think, be more exact to say, the consequence of being born anew, or that which follows the new birth, which is the commencement of sanctification, is the continuance, and increase, and final completion of sanctification. This is what is taught in Scripture, and confirmed by experience. And it is probable he had some such idea, as may be gathered from other remarks of his on this subject. But a logical discussion, designed for learned men and professional students in theology, should be arranged in a logical order, and expressed definitely and exactly.

But that which I regard as most worthy of notice is, that our author considers the blessings of redemption, which are represented by the payment of a debt, by the sacrificial atonement, and by the ransom of a slave or captive, as *the consequences of being born anew*, this new birth being the grand and only effect of what he calls the causative act, meaning doubtless the great redemptive act.

On this view of the subject I have several remarks to make.

The first is, that the new birth is directly and specifically ascribed to the *Holy Spirit*. It is set forth in Scripture as the appropriate work of the third person of the Trinity. And if the new birth is the primary and chief effect of the redemptive act, why should not the Holy Spirit be called the Redeemer? Instead of calling Christ the agens causator in the new birth, why does he not give this title to the Holy Ghost, which the Scriptures so expressly represent as the causative agent in that great work?

Secondly. Our author holds that we are saved from the *penal*

Digitized by Google

consequences of sin, in other words, from the evils involved in the penalty of the law, in consequence of the new birth; whereas it is the current representation of the Bible, that we are saved from these penal evils in consequence of the sufferings of Christ; that our liberation from them is procured by his expiatory death. Christ shed his blood for the remission of sin; he died to deliver us from the curse of the law, that is, to procure our forgiveness. Now if forgiveness, or liberation from the penal consequences of sin, has not an intimate relation to the death of Christ; if his death is not in a special sense the meritorious cause or ground of it; why is it so represented by Christ and his apostles? Why does not Christ say, this is my blood which is shed for many, *for their new birth?* Why does not Paul say, in whom we have redemption through his blood, *even the renewal of the heart?* Why does he not say, Christ was set forth to be a propitiation for sin, that God might be just and *the sanctifier* of him that believeth? The scheme of Coleridge overlooks the peculiar sense of all the passages which teach that Christ died for our sins, that is, on account of our sins, and that he died for us, that is, in our stead. He rejects that which has been regarded by orthodox Christians universally, as the foundation doctrine of Christianity, the doctrine of the vicarious sufferings of Christ.

Thirdly. On the principle of our author, it is difficult to see what necessity there was for the death of Christ, or to understand what influence it has in our salvation. Had not God power to create us anew without the death of Christ? Could he not, on the scheme of Coleridge, send the Spirit to make us holy without the shedding of blood? If it should be said that there was some hinderance in the way, which rendered it inconsistent with the character of God, or with the principles of his moral government, to do this without the death of his Son; I ask what that hinderance was? If he says it was our *sinfulness;* I ask how that was a hinderance, and how it was removed by Christ's death? If our sinfulness is regarded merely as disqualifying us for the enjoyments of heaven, can it not be removed by the sanctifying influence of the Spirit? How could Christ's death, taken by itself,

Digitized by Google

accomplish our renewal? If Christ's death had a direct efficacy to regenerate sinners, we should suppose that all sinners would at once be regenerated. But where are sinners said to be born again of the death of Christ? The new birth is an effect resulting from the Holy Spirit, as its immediate cause. What then was the necessity of the sufferings of Christ? On the common principle, this question is easily answered. Sinners had incurred the curse of the law. Divine justice demanded that they should endure it. They could not be delivered from it, unless something was done which would meet the demands of his justice, and remove the hinderance to their receiving spiritual blessings from his hand. In this deplorable state of things, Christ dies for their sins, and dies in their place. In consequence of this, forgiveness of sin, and the renewal of the heart by the Spirit, and all the blessings of salvation can be granted. Sin had shut the door of mercy against us. Christ's death opened the door, and we may now be delivered from evil, and receive the blessings of salvation. And as a renewal to holiness by the Spirit is an important part of salvation, and is indispensable to our enjoying other parts, this, as really as forgiveness, is granted on account of Christ's death. According to this view of the subject, the necessity of Christ's death, and the influence it has on our salvation, become very obvious. The cross of Christ is thus surrounded with a clear light. We fix our eyes upon it. It shows us that we were under a sentence of condemnation, utterly helpless and hopeless in ourselves. It shows the love of God in providing a Saviour. It vindicates his justice. It honors his law, and invests it with new authority. It gives a new exhibition of the evil of sin. It presents new and more powerful motives to obedience. It does all that a righteous God saw to be necessary. He can now be just and the justifier of those who believe.

But on the scheme of Coleridge, which makes the new birth or renewal to holiness the great and only thing to be accomplished in redemption, who can see any necessity for the death of Christ? And who can understand what is the real influence of it in the work of redemption? He often discards the Unitarian scheme

Digitized by Google

in respect to this subject. But what better does he substitute? Under the second head, where he undertakes to answer the question, what is the causative act in redemption, and where we should have mentioned Christ's obedience unto death, he gives no definite answer, saying only that it is a transcendent mystery. The question is, what is the causative act? Suppose it is a transcendent mystery, still what is the act which *is* a mystery? Does he mean to say, I cannot *name* the act, but it is something transcendently mysterious? I would then ask him, is it any act at all? And do you know whose act it is, and what it is? If so, tell us. If you do not know what it is, then why pretend to tell us? Why ask the question, unless you mean to answer it? Or if you ask the question to show that you cannot answer it, then say so; and think not to impose upon your readers by giving an answer which is no answer.

Fourthly. Coleridge seems to be apprehensive that the opinion which the orthodox have usually entertained on the subject of redemption, sets aside the importance of the new spiritual birth, or at least that it gives such prominence to the idea of Christ's dying to discharge us from our debt to the divine justice, that we shall forget that he died to deliver us from the dominion of sin, and to bring us back to a spiritual life. But any one who candidly examines the matter will see, that those who hold the common doctrine, make the new spiritual birth as important as he does, and that they believe it to be as truly an object of Christ's death and intercession. We maintain that the death of Christ not only removed the curse of the law, and laid the foundation for our forgiveness, but procured the gift of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify us, and to prepare us for heaven. The renewal of the heart is ever to be regarded as a blessing of unspeakable importance, without which no one can enjoy the blessings of forgiveness.

As to the particular order, in which the two leading blessings of salvation are related to the death of Christ, and to one another, we must take care not to adopt any opinions which would contravene the obvious meaning of any part of Scripture. The

Digitized by Google

sacred writers teach, that both forgiveness and sanctification have a real and inseparable connection with the death of Christ, and flow from it; that these two blessings always go together; that no sinner is actually pardoned who has not been renewed, and that no one is renewed who is not pardoned. They are both owing to the grace of God, and to the blood of atonement. But I would not willingly take upon me to determine which of the two is the more important. I would rather do all in my power to show the great importance of both. It is clear from the word of God, that repentance and faith are in an important sense conditions, on our part, of divine forgiveness. We must repent and believe in Christ that we may be pardoned. We cannot realize the blessings of forgiveness, before we turn from sin and believe in Christ. This is the order in which we become the subjects of these two distinct parts of salvation. I say distinct parts, but not separate parts. They are always joined together, and they really imply each other.

Suppose now a case like this. A preacher, who undertakes to show what is the efficacy of Christ's death, or to describe the great salvation which flows from it, confines himself to *sanctification*, or the restoration of the soul to the holy image of God. He goes through with his account of redemption without any particular notice of that remission of sin, which comes from the blood of atonement. In short, he makes redemption consist merely in the work of the Holy Spirit, and gives Christ's death no concern in it, except as it conduces to spiritual purification. I ask whether such a preacher follows the guidance of revelation, and teaches as Christ and his apostles taught. Here I think is the radical fault of those preachers, who derive their theology from the writings of Coleridge, rather than from the word of God.

In previous lectures, I have taken pains to show, that many of the expressions which are found in the Bible on the subject of atonement, are figurative; that when the sacred writers speak of Christ as a sacrificial lamb, a ransom, a propitiation, a Redeemer, etc., they have their eye upon those spiritual benefits, which have a resemblance to the benefits that resulted from the

Digitized by Google

offering of the sacrifice of atonement under the Mosaic economy, or that result from a literal ransom of captives, or from propitiating one who has been angry, or from the discharge of a pecuniary obligation for a poor debtor by the charity of a friend. And this would seem to be the main point which Coleridge aims at. But in his account of the matter there are several things which I must regard as exceptionable.

1. He introduces his ideas respecting the figurative import of Scriptural expressions on this subject, as though they were peculiar to himself, and as though they originated with him; whereas learned and discreet divines have generally maintained, that the language referred to is more or less metaphorical, and is intended to set forth the spiritual benefits which flow from the death of Christ under the image of redemption of captives by a ransom, the payment of a poor man's debt, etc. So far as respects the general question, whether the language has a literal or metaphorical sense, I see no reason why Coleridge should put on the appearance of differing so widely from the best theological writers. But it is the frequent fault of such a man as he, to think that ideas which have been entertained for ages by other men, originate with himself. This fault in Coleridge may result from the fact, that he was not very familiar with the writings of the best protestant divines, or from the fact that there is something peculiar to him in the very opinions which he holds in common with others, those opinions not shaping themselves in his mind, just as they do in the minds of others, and acquiring a peculiar cast from his singular intellectual habits, and his singular style.

2. In his interpretation of tropical words and phrases, Coleridge mars the sense which was evidently meant to be conveyed by the sacred writers. Figurative language has a meaning, an obvious meaning, as well as that which is literal. Metaphors are not designed to obscure or weaken the ideas intended, but to express them with greater clearness and strength. When the Scriptures declare that Christ gave himself a ransom for sinners, they indeed use a figure of speech. But the figure makes the idea of the spiritual blessing which Christ procures by his death, more vivid.

Digitized by Google

And as to those spiritual blessings themselves, — *they* are not metaphors. Forgiveness of sin is not a figure of speech. Endless misery is not a metaphor, and deliverance from it is not a metaphor. Deliverance from punishment is no more a metahpor, than deliverance from sin itself. The death of Christ is no figure of speech. He was literally crucified. He literally suffered and died. And he literally died for our sins. There is no metaphor in this. If you say his death is a ransom, or the payment of our debt, you use a figure of speech. You represent the benefits of Christs death under the idea of paying a price for the deliverance of captives, or of paying the debt of a poor man to procure his release from prison. But the figure has an obvious, substantial sense. The only question is, what are those moral, spiritual benefits, which Christ's death procures? Now these benefits may be summed up in forgiveness, or deliverance from punishment, sanctification by the Spirit, and the endless enjoyment of God. These benefits are realities, though they may be set forth by figurative language. And one of them is as much a reality as the other. Coleridge makes the new, spiritual birth a reality, and seems to regard the Scripture phrase, *being born again, as literal.* But it is no more a reality than forgiveness, and the language of Scripture which sets it forth, is quite as figurative, as any of the language of Scripture which sets forth the blessing of forgiveness. Coleridge represents *being born and sanctified of the Spirit*, as the great blessing which redemption procures, and makes this comprehend all other blessings. But spiritual renovation no more comprehends forgiveness, than forgiveness comprehends renovation. And you may just as well say that forgiveness is the whole of salvation, as that sanctification is so. In the gospel plan they are inseparably connected. As God has settled it, each comes with the other, and each involves the other. Still they are in their nature distinct, and they often require a distinct consideration.

I have frequently been inclined to ask how Coleridge was led to think so little of Christ's death as the ground or procuring cause of our forgiveness, and to regard the renewal of the heart as the whole of salvation; and why he was so exceedingly fearful

Digitized by Google

of carrying to a dangerous extreme the analogy implied in the metaphors which set forth forgiveness through the blood of Christ, when he showed no such fear respecting the other part of the subject, and seemed to consider the language of Christ, "ye must *be born again*" as not being metaphorical at all. The probability is, that in his own experience he had never been so particularly impressed with his guilt, that is, his exposure to the penalty of the law, as he had with his inward alienation from the spiritual requirements of the law; that he had thought more of the holiness and purity of God, than of his justice, and more of the evil nature of sin, than of the dreadfulness of its punishment; and, of course, made it his inquiry, not so much how he should escape the penalty of the law, as how he should obtain a conformity with its precepts. Now I really think it safer to err on this side, than on the other. But it is safest of all, not to err on either side. It is important that the experience of Christians should correspond with all parts of divine truth, and with all the principles of divine government. And I am sure that any transgressor, whose conscience is thoroughly awakened, and who considers what it is to be under the wrath of God, and to dwell with everlasting burnings, will be exceedingly solicitous to know, how he can obtain deliverance, and in what way God can be just and yet forgive his offences. And we should think that such a person would welcome the assurance, that Jesus by his death delivers believers from the curse of the law. And this deliverance from the penalty of the law by the death of Christ, we should think would always be regarded as a fundamental blessing of the Christian religion. I hardly know how to account for it, that any one who believes the Scriptures to be divinely inspired, should not regard it in this light, and that he should suppress or pass over the prominent fact, that Jesus died for our sins, and make the whole of redemption to consist in spiritual renovation.

Coleridge notices with a just severity the opinion of some, — an opinion as distant from the belief of judicious Calvinists, as the east is from the west, — that the varied expressions of Paul on this subject are to be literally interpreted, namely, that sin is or in-

Digitized by Google

volves an infinite debt in the proper and law-court sense of the term, — a debt to the vindictive justice of God the Father, which can be liquidated by nothing but the everlasting misery of Adam and all his posterity, or by a sum of suffering equal to this; and that the Son of God paid the debt and satisfied divine justice by suffering agonies which were equal in amount to what would have been the sum total of the torments of all mankind here and hereafter. Now I say, that the great body of orthodox divines are so far from holding this opinion, that they regard it as a monstrous error.

Our author shows clearly his habit of thinking, by introducing the case of a worthy mother, whose son had been guilty of ingratitude and vice. His object is to show that divine justice is satisfied, not by the sufferings of Christ, but by the repentance and thorough reformation of sinners. He says, suppose some other person should step in, and perform all the duties of an affectionate son, and then should say to her, — I hope you will now be satisfied with my faithful conduct in the place of your son's, and will henceforth regard him with the same complacency as if he had always been a dutiful child. He justly concludes that the mother would think it a cruel insult to her wounded feelings, and that nothing but the return of her son to gratitude and duty could satisfy the mother.

You are aware, how easy it is for an objector to cavil, and by caricatures to expose any doctrine of revelation or of natural religion to ridicule. The representation here made is inappropriate and unjust in more than one respect. In the first place, the mother stands merely in a private relation to her son, and all her feelings are confined to that relation. Of course all she would ask for in order to her forgiving her son, would be his repentance and return to duty. But the case is very different with one who sustains the office of a civil magistrate, and who acts for the good of the community, and especially with God, the Ruler of the world, who is the guardian of the highest interests of a great moral empire. Here satisfaction becomes quite a different thing from the satisfaction of one who stands merely in a private relation,

Digitized by Google

and is governed altogether by the feelings which belong to that relation. The representation is faulty too, as it implies that satisfaction is given by the death of Christ, without involving the reformation of sinners; that they may be pardoned and restored to favor, while impenitent. But we are far from holding any such thing. The death of Christ does give complete satisfaction to the Governor of the world, so far as his justice is concerned in executing the penalty of the law. In other words, it removes the necessity of punishment, arising from the threat of the law and the righteousness of the lawgiver, — which, aside from the death of Christ, would have imperiously demanded that punishment. But no one can ever reap the benefits of this satisfaction to divine justice, without a spiritual renovation, showing itself in repentance and faith. This is indispensably necessary, not for the purpose of satisfying divine justice, not to accomplish the end which was primarily and directly aimed at in the death of Christ, but for another purpose, that is, to prepare sinners actually to enjoy the blessings of a free and full salvation.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXXIV.

REGENERATION. ITS SPECIAL NATURE.

We pass now from one of the chief doctrines of Christianity to another; from the work of our great High Priest in making expiation for sin and procuring the blessings of salvation, to the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing men to holiness, and bringing them actually to partake of the blessings procured by the death of Christ.

The subject, now proposed for consideration, is of the highest conceivable importance to every human being. For it is the declaration of him whose word is truth, that no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven, except he be *born again*. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. And as holiness does not result from our natural birth, there must be a new birth, a spiritual renovation, a restoration to the moral image of God. This being the case, it becomes every one who enjoys the benefit of revelation, to be awake to the importance of this spiritual change, and to regard it as the one thing needful. I indulge the hope, that in your present studies, and in your future labors in the ministry, you will regard it in this light, and will never overlook its momentous bearing upon the present and eternal well-being of yourselves and your fellow-men.

In these Lectures, I shall use the word, *regeneration*, in the sense commonly given to it by the most respectable writers, that is, to denote the change which is necessary to prepare men for

Digitized by Google

heaven, and which is wrought in them by the Spirit of God. Our Saviour speaks of this change as a being *born again* — *born of the Spirit.* It is indeed evident, that when the sacred writers speak of men's being *renewed*, they frequently refer not only to the commencement of sanctification, but to its progress. But I shall use the word with a particular reference to the *commencement* of this work of the Spirit, though not exclusively of its continuance.

The first point to which I would invite your attention is, that *man himself* — man as an intelligent, moral, but depraved being, man as a *sinner*, is the subject of regeneration. "*Ye* must be born again." "Except *a man* (except any one) be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." If man were free from sin, he would not need regeneration.

It is sometimes said, that regeneration consists merely in *right exercises*, such as loving and obeying God. It is true, that the change is closely connected with man's inward exercises and outward actions. If a man is regenerated, he will love and obey God. A holy being will have holy exercises and perform holy actions. "A good tree will bring forth good fruit." And again, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt." A moral agent that is unholy, will put forth unholy exercises. Holiness or unholiness belongs primarily and essentially to *man himself*, as an intelligent, moral being, and to his *actions* secondarily and consequentially. You may ask, whether there is any thing *back* of right moral action, that is, *prior* to it. I answer, yes; there is an *agent*, endued with all necessary moral powers and faculties. And there is something more than an *agent*, and something more than a *moral agent.* If the actions are holy, there is a *holy* moral agent. And if the actions are unholy, there is an *unholy* agent. It is in reference to this subject that Christ says, "The tree is known by its fruit." It is known by the fruit, whether the tree is good or bad. The goodness or badness of the tree is *back* of the fruit. The fruit does not *constitute* the goodness or badness of the tree, but is derived from it, and makes it known. In like manner holy

Digitized by Google

actions result from the holiness of the agent, and show that he is holy; and unholy actions show that he is unholy. So far as we know the quality of the exercises or acts, we know the quality of the agent. The connection between the character of the actions and the character of the agent is invariable. Take an unrenewed sinner, who, according to the Scriptures, is an enemy to God. What now is necessary in order that he may love God? It is necessary that he should be born again. *He*, the *man*, must be created anew; and if he is created anew, it will be *unto good works:*—not that *good works* must be created, he himself remaining unchanged; but that *he* must be created anew, and then, as a matter of course, good works will be performed. If a man is regenerated, or made holy, holy affections and acts will follow—he will love and obey God. How can he love and obey, while he is an unrenewed sinner? How can a bad tree bear good fruit?

To say that regeneration *consists in* good moral exercises, that is, in loving God and obeying his commands, seems to me to be an abuse of language. It is as unphilosophical and strange, as to say, that the birth of a child consists in his breathing, or that the creation of the sun consists in his shining. *Man himself* is born again, and is born of God. Regeneration is a change wrought in fallen, sinful *man* by the Holy Spirit; and this change is developed and acted out in holy affections and a holy life. This is the doctrine of Scripture and of the Christian church.

Do you ask, whether regeneration is a *physical* change? I cannot answer this without knowing what is meant by the word *physical*. If it means, as it commonly does, that which is not of a moral nature; then I say, regeneration is not a physical change. If it is used to point out what may be called the *essence* of the mind, or that, without which the mind cannot exist; if it is used to signify reason, memory, conscience, or any of those faculties, capacities or susceptibilities, which necessarily belong to man as an accountable being, a subject of divine law; my answer must still be, that regeneration is not a physical change. The Holy Spirit in renewing the sinner, does not take away any of these natural faculties or susceptibilities, nor does it impart any new

Digitized by Google

ones. Paul, when regenerated, possessed the same faculty of reason, the same faculty of conscience, the same power of memory, the same natural passions and appetites, as he did before he was regenerated. He was not changed in regard to these any more than he was in regard to his body. More properly speaking, his body was his physical part. But the essential faculties and capacities of a rational and accountable agent are sometimes, though, I think, improperly, called physical, — it being intended thus to distinguish them from that which is strictly *moral*.

But when I say that the natural faculties of the mind, as well as the members of the body, are essentially the same after regeneration, as before, I do not mean that they undergo no change whatsoever. In regard to their *direction* and *use* they *are* changed. "All things are new." Whereas they were once the instruments of sin, they are now the instruments of righteousness. In this sense regeneration implies an important change in all the faculties of the mind, and in all the bodily members and senses. And if any one pleases, he may call this a physical change. It is really a change in the *use* of what is physical. And this change extends to a man's property, and time, and to all that comes under his influence. But this new use of what he possesses, this new aim and purpose, and this new life result from a change which is more inward, *a renewal in the spirit of the mind*. This renewal, like other works of God, is in itself imperceptible. But it is made known by its results, or fruits, which are love, joy, peace, etc. From the unrenewed spirit of the mind, the depraved heart, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, — murders, — covetousness, — pride." All these, Christ says, come "from within, out of the heart," that is, the unrenewed heart. The heart, in its natural state, is the fountain, from which proceed all evil affections and actions. The heart, in its regenerate state, is the fountain from which proceed all holy affections and actions.

If I should undertake to describe more specifically what change is effected by the renewing the Holy Ghost, I should say, it is a change in man's moral *disposition*, in his *governing inclination or propensity*; or as it is otherwise expressed, in his *moral taste*,

Digitized by Google

or *relish*, or his *principle of action*. All this phraseology is in familiar use, and is well understood both by the learned and the unlearned. The *disposition* or *principle of action* is regarded by all as constituting a man's character. If a man's predominant disposition is covetousness, or ambition, or malice, we say, *he* — the *man*, is covetous, ambitious, or malevolent. If his disposition is to do good, we say, *he* is *benevolent*. This is his character. If he has a disposition to love and obey God, a taste for spiritual objects, a relish for the pleasures of religion; we say, he is a good man, a pious man, a Christian. This is a kind of language which all men use, and to which all give the same meaning. Nor does it occasion any difficulty, except with those who carry their philosophical speculations too far.

No one can reasonably deny the existence of such a disposition, taste, or principle of action in man because it is *in itself* concealed from our view, and is known only by its effects or operations. For the same is true of the soul of man, and of all its faculties, and of all the powers existing in the natural world. And the same is true of the Supreme Being, of whom are all things. All these are incapable of being perceived or known by us, except in and by their operations and effects. The existence of God and of other spiritual beings, and even of our own souls, can be understood or perceived by us in no other way. To deny then the existence of a disposition, or taste, or principle, which is antecedent to moral action, and is the ground or cause of it, because in itself it is not a subject of direct consciousness, and is manifested to us only by its operations and results, would be in effect, to deny the most important doctrines of human belief.

What then is regeneration? It is a change wrought in depraved man by the divine Spirit — a change from a state of sin to a state of holiness; from a disposition to hate the true character of God to a disposition to love God; from a disposition to seek one's own interest as his supreme object, to a disposition to seek the good of others. The renewing of the Holy Ghost gives this new disposition or inclination, this new taste or principle of action. And it shows itself in the following way. When holy

Digitized by Google

objects are presented to the mind of a regenerate man, a correspondent affection is waked up in his soul. He is pleased with holy objects; whereas he was before displeased. He has a taste for spiritual employments and pleasures, for which in his unregenerate state he had no taste. This is what we mean by a new disposition, a new principle of action. The renewing of the Spirit does not consist in creating holy exercises in the unchanged mind of the sinner; not in loving and obeying God without any disposition to love and obey; not in the actings of benevolence and faith springing from no principle of benevolence and faith. But it consists primarily and essentially in giving a new and holy disposition, a principle of love and obedience. The regenerated soul is so changed, that it will habitually and permanently love God and man, and obey the moral law; in other words, it has permanently a new *disposition*. It is a *holy soul*. It is a pure fountain, and will send forth pure waters.

Scripture speaks of a "new heart, and a new spirit" — of "a heart to love God and keep his commandments;" which is surely very different from a heart or spirit which acts in the way of enmity and disobedience. Not only the affections and actions are different, but the *heart*, the *spirit* is different. The *sinner* himself is changed — the *agent*, the *person* is sanctified. Common sense and philosophy have always taught and always will teach, that the current of a man's affections, desires and volitions proceed from an inward principle, called disposition, or state of mind, and that this governing disposition essentially constitutes character. It seems to me absurd to suppose, that a moral agent who is totally depraved, will ever love and obey God, without being changed in his moral disposition, or principle of action. Right exercises presuppose a right disposition, and proceed from it. If any one loves God, it is because *he* is renewed — because, in the disposition or temper of his mind, *he* is changed.

What I have here advanced is in accordance with the views of the most respectable Calvinistic divines. Charnock speaks of the new creation as consisting in *gracious qualities and habits of the soul, which dispose it to holy acts*. Owen calls it "an habitual

Digitized by Google

holy principle wrought in us by God — a supernatural principle of holy actions." Edwards strenuously maintains that a moral principle must exist in the soul, prior (in the order of nature) to moral action. And he considers regeneration as essentially consisting in imparting to the soul a new moral sense, taste, or principle, adapted to the perception and love of moral excellence. "This new sense, and the new dispositions that attend it," he says, "are not new *faculties*, but new principles of nature. By a principle of nature, in this place, I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular kind of exercise — or a natural habit, giving a person ability and disposition to exert the faculties in exercises of such a certain kind," so that such exertion of his faculties may be said to be his nature. Bellamy refers with approbation to the views of Edwards, and says; "In regeneration there is a new, divine and holy taste begotten in the heart by the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit."

Dwight discusses this subject extensively. I shall quote a few sentences. He says, "Without a relish for spiritual objects, I cannot see that any discoveries concerning them, however clear and bright, can render them pleasing to the soul." "The nature of the object perceived is disrelished. The more, then, it is perceived, the more it is disrelished of course, so long as the present taste continues. It seems therefore indispensable, that its relish with respect to spiritual objects should first be changed." "A relish for all spiritual objects, never before existing in him, is communicated to every man, who is the subject of regeneration, by the Spirit of God." "This relish," he says "has been commonly styled disposition, temper, inclination, heart, etc. He calls it disposition." He says, "This disposition in Adam, (i. e. when first created) was the cause whence his virtuous volitions proceeded; the reason why they were virtuous and not sinful." "Plain men, with truth as well as with good sense, ascribe all the volitions of mankind to *disposition*." "The soul of every man who becomes a Christian, is *renewed* by the communication of a relish for spiritual objects."

Digitized by Google

The Rev. George Payne, LL. D., of Exeter, England, says: "I think Dr. Dwight might also have referred to the case of infants regenerated by the Spirit of Grace. The change produced in their minds does not consist in just views of divine things, or in holy affections towards them. For they are physically incapable of either. But the germ of holiness is implanted; some effect is produced, which will lead, if the life of the child is spared, to just apprehensions and holy affections."

Dr. Hopkins says: "As depravity is wholly in the will, or heart, the source and seat of all moral actions, the divine operation directly respects the heart, and consists in changing that"—that is, in changing not only moral actions, but that which is the source and seat of moral actions, namely, the will or heart. "The renovation of the will, or giving a new heart, sets the whole soul right in all its powers and faculties."

It is sometimes objected, that, if the renewing of the Holy Ghost imparts a new disposition or taste, prior, in the order of nature, to holy exercises; then regeneration is a *physical change*. But we regard this objection as without force, inasmuch as this disposition or taste is not of a physical, but altogether of a moral nature. It is, in my view, an unphilosophical and groundless assumption, that nothing but *exercise* is of a moral nature. Of course, any argument founded on that assumption, appears to me totally inconclusive. The opinion has been so common, and is so obviously true as to need no arguments to support it, that man has a *moral nature*, and *moral* as well as intellectual *faculties*, *antecedently to moral action*, and that it is this *moral nature* which qualifies him for *moral action*. And it is also the common opinion, that it is a virtuous disposition that leads to virtuous action, and a vicious disposition that leads to vicious action. To assert that there is moral exercise in man without an antecedent moral nature and moral disposition or propensity, is as unreasonable as to assert that man has *intellectual* action without an intellectual *nature*.

There are some who hold, that every human being, from the beginning of his existence, has a disposition, propensity, or bias,

Digitized by Google

which certainly leads to sin, and that, while this disposition or bias remains, sin and only sin will be the result; but that this original disposition or bias is not of a moral nature. Of course, they consider it as *physical*. And as this disposition or bias must be changed in order to right exercise and action, they who say, the disposition is not of a moral nature, are really chargeable with holding to a *physical change* in regeneration, though they profess to deny it. They must unavoidably hold to this, so long as they assert that the disposition or propensity to love and obey God, which is given in regeneration, is of a physical and not of a moral nature.

A somewhat plausible objection, which has been urged against the views above stated, deserves some attention in this place. If a disposition or propensity to holy acts is necessary to account for such acts, and if a disposition to commit sin is necessary to account for sinful acts; then how was it with the first sin? Was there in Adam, before he fell, a disposition or propensity to sin? In reference to this, I remark, first; to transgress the divine law under the influence of any kind or degree of temptation, is sin. Secondly. When Adam was tempted to sin, it is inconceivable that he should have complied with the temptation, without a state of mind which may properly be called a disposition or aptitude to comply. The temptation may have been the means of producing such a disposition; but such a disposition or aptitude must have existed in him prior, in the order of nature, to the determination or choice of his will to transgress. When he sinned, he manifested a state of mind, a disposition, or propensity, different from what had governed him before. And who can doubt that this state of mind was prior, in the order of nature, to his sinful act? Who can suppose that with a heart perfectly disposed and inclined to obey, and while it *continued* perfectly inclined to obey, he did actually disobey? There was, then, a change in his disposition or state of mind, prior to the change in his volitions and actions. And how is this change to be accounted for? You may ask this question; but it may be, that the subject lies out of the province of the human intellect, and that no man

Digitized by Google

can give a satisfactory answer. That which seems to approach nearest to an answer is, that God, in a sovereign manner, withheld that influence of his Spirit which was necessary to shield him from the influence of temptation and to preserve him in a state of holiness, and that, in consequence of this withdrawment, Adam was left under the mere influence of those affections which necessarily belonged to him as a human being — was left a rational, moral agent, without holiness. Of course, he was disposed to gratify himself rather than to obey God. That is, he came to have an aptitude to the indulgence of selfish, worldly affections, and a propensity to violate the divine commands. This account of the matter seems to have been satisfactory to some of the greatest and best of men. But suppose there are insolvable difficulties attending this subject, and obscurities which we cannot clear up; is this a reason for denying what is plain? And is it not a plain truth, that the tree is known by its fruit — that a man's inward character, his disposition, the state of his heart, is known by his conduct? And why should we depart from this principle in regard to moral agents who fell from a state of holiness? A moral agent cannot commit the first sin, any more than any subsequent sin, without a disposition to sin. It is unaccountable, you say, *how* Adam's disposition or principle of action was changed. I admit that we cannot explain *how* it was changed. But the fact that it *was* changed — that from being right it became wrong, is incontrovertible. The only question now to be considered is, whether it was changed prior to his actual transgression, or afterwards? If you say it was not changed prior to his actual disobedience; then you have the singular fact of a man's committing an act of transgression, by which he lost the favor of God and was expelled from Paradise, *without any disposition to transgress* — certainly without any *culpable* disposition; that while his state of mind, his inclination, his inward principle of action, was perfectly faultless and right, he voluntarily committed that sin against God, which brought ruin upon himself and all his posterity. And if he could begin to sin without any disposition to sin, why could he not *continue* to sin without any such dis-

Digitized by Google

position? *How* Adam's disposition was changed from holy to unholy cannot, I admit, be satisfactorily explained. But shall we, I ask, — shall we on this account deny what is evident, that is, that his disposition *was* changed, and that when he sinned he acted according to the disposition he then had? I contend only for the common truth, that man's affections and voluntary acts are according to his disposition, or the state of his heart, and that under the influence of external motives, they proceed from it. But whatever difficulties may arise in regard to the case of Adam, it is evident that all human beings from the first, are now inclined to sin. This is admitted by every man who regards either Scripture or facts, although the subject is involved in such mystery. And this native inclination or bias, called the corruption of their nature, is admitted to be the ground of their actual transgressions. In other words, it is admitted that their having this corrupt inclination or bias accounts for it, that they commit actual sin. I say, *accounts* for it, or is *the reason* of it. For if they were free from a corrupt bias, and continued to have a disposition or state of mind perfectly pure and holy, as Jesus had; they would resist temptation, and be, as he was, *without sin*.

But I am treating of *regeneration*. And the position which I maintain is, that the Divine Spirit does not change a man's exercises and actions while his disposition or the state of his heart remains as it was; but that it gives him a new disposition, or changes his heart, and that, being thus renewed, he puts forth new exercises and performs new actions. *He himself* is made holy, and then, in consequence, his *acts* are holy. His heart is new, and from this proceed new exercises. The tree is made good, and then bears good fruit. "The fruit of the Spirit" — the Spirit which regenerates the heart, — "is love, joy, peace, etc." These affections and habits of the regenerate heart show themselves in correspondent outward practice. Here we have the habitual, permanent character of the converted man, the renewed moral agent. *He* is *holy*. He is *a saint*. He is *pious*, *benevolent*, *obedient*. So we say, Jesus was "meek and lowly *in heart*." The language is plain. We know exactly what it means. There

Digitized by Google

is no obscurity in it, unless we make it obscure by false philosophy.

It must be kept in mind, that the change which takes place in the disposition or state of the heart, gives a new direction to all the faculties of the mind, and to all the members of the body. In this sense, "all things are new." All things are turned to a higher and nobler use. Whereas they were instruments of sin, they have now become instruments of righteousness. All this is the fruit of the new disposition or principle of action, which is imparted to the soul by the Holy Ghost. A holy heart comes from the Holy Spirit. Holy love comes from a holy heart, and holy actions come from holy love. This is the order. There can be no acts of obedience where there is no love. And there can be no love without a regenerated, holy heart. A holy heart, or, more exactly, a holy *man*, loves divine things as soon as they are presented to view. And the actions will be according to this love. The state of the heart, the affections, and the voluntary actions all harmonize.

It is sometimes made a question, whether repentance or conversion is the same as regeneration, or the new birth. The answer is obvious. Regeneration is the change of the heart by the Holy Spirit. Conversion, that is, actual turning from sin, or repentance, is the *consequence* of regeneration. So is holy love; so is every Christian grace. The spiritual principle, the seed, which grace has planted, develops itself in obedience, and finally in universal and complete obedience to the divine law. From some passages of Scripture, taken by themselves, we might suppose, that the change wrought in regeneration is in all respects complete at once. If one, who is dead in sin, is raised from the dead, we might naturally think that death is entirely removed; that, if he is really turned from sin and sanctified, he is *completely* turned and *perfectly* sanctified. And if we were to form our judgment on this matter from our own reason merely, we should probably think that it must be so, — that no one who sees the evil of sin, and repents, and tastes the joys of salvation, will ever sin again. But the current language of revelation and the ex-

Digitized by Google

perience of the best of men clearly show, that while the change in the renewed is real, it is far from being at once complete; that while there is a commencement of holiness, there is much remaining sin; that through the whole life of believers on earth, there is a warfare against the sin which dwells in them. By this remarkable fact the deep-rooted depravity of the heart is made very clear. As God is able to sanctify his people perfectly at the beginning of their Christian life, we are compelled to believe, that there are reasons, founded in the unsearchable wisdom of God, for another mode of proceeding in the dispensation of his grace. And it cannot be doubted, that the plan which God actually pursues will, in the end, most fully manifest to the saints their own exceeding wickedness and ill-desert, and the glory of that grace to which they are indebted for their salvation.

If these things be so, it may be asked, what we are to understand by those passages of Scripture which teach that believers are delivered from sin and are complete in Christ — that old things are passed away, and all things become new. The best answer I am able to give is, that in all such passages the work of the Holy Spirit is spoken of *as a whole;* that the sacred writers represent the character of the regenerate not only as it is, but as it will finally be; that they speak of that saving change which though at present only begun, is destined to be carried on to perfection. Just as a little child is spoken of as a *man*. A *man*, we say, is *born;* that is, one who, according to the established course of nature, is *to be a man*. So it is said, Rom. 4: 17, that God "calleth those things which be not, as though they were." This principle lies at the bottom of many representations of Scripture. What God determines to do may be spoken of as though it was actually done.

So far as the mode of preaching on this subject is concerned, there is no practical difficulty. We are to copy the example of those who were inspired. They recognized the duty — the proper work of depraved moral agents, and required them to do it. They called upon sinners to repent, to turn from their evil ways, to believe, to confess their sins, to pray, to love God, and to obey

Digitized by Google

his word. This is the part which sinners, however guilty and depraved, are required to perform. This is the appropriate sphere of their agency, their own distinct agency. It is the converted sinner, and not God, that repents, and makes confession of sin, and prays, and believes, and obeys. It is, I say, *he* that does this and no one else.

Now what can be more proper for the ministers of Christ, than to do as he and his apostles did, that is, to exhort men to do their duty — their own proper work — the work which is essential to their salvation, to urge and persuade them to do this reasonable and necessary work, by the most moving and solemn considerations drawn from the word of God. Thus far all is plain. — Then we must recognize the other agency concerned — the agency of God's Spirit; must set forth its importance and necessity; must show, that no being but God, ever did or can exercise the proper, efficient agency which regenerates sinners. We must represent this renewing, sanctifying agency as the appropriate and exclusive work of God, — as a work to be desired and sought in earnest prayer, and as a work which, whenever accomplished, must be ascribed to the glory of his grace. Here all is plain, if we only follow the teachings of revelation. We are to hold forth the two agencies above mentioned as perfectly distinct, but not as disjoined — the sanctifying work of the Spirit being the cause of all holy affections and acts in man, and holy affections and acts in man being the effect and the evidence of the sanctifying work of the Spirit. But this subject will be more particularly considered in the following Lectures.

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXXV.

REGENERATION. ITS CAUSE OR AUTHOR. THE WORK MANIFESTS GREAT POWER; IS SOVEREIGN; AND IS SPECIAL AND SUPERNATURAL.

THE errors which prevail respecting regeneration, arise more or less from men's inattention to the subject, or from unprofitable speculations and controversies, or from the objections which have been urged against the truth by learned and subtle opposers. But the principal source of these errors is that very blindness of mind and depravity of heart, which nothing but the renewing of the Holy Spirit can effectually remove. The only way, therefore, in which men can be brought truly to understand the reality and excellence of the work of God in the renewal of sinners, is to experience it themselves. And however it may be with some Christians, whose religious exercises are wanting in clearness and power, there can be no doubt that those who have a deep and thorough experience of the gracious work of the Spirit, will entertain just and Scriptural views of it. The eyes of their understanding are enlightened, so that they discern spiritual things.

The nature of regeneration having been considered, the next inquiry will be, to *what cause is this change to be ascribed?* And the position which I shall endeavor to maintain is, that *regeneration is to be ascribed to a special act of divine power;* that it is *the work of the Spirit of God.*

Power denotes that which produces or is competent to produce

Digitized by Google

effects, whatever may be their nature. In other words, it denotes that which is or may be a cause.

This holds as to the power of God. Count up the effects which God has produced, the things which he has done or will do, and ascribe them to him as the cause, and you will attain to the proper idea of his power. The particular denominations we give to power, are generally derived from the different classes of effects contemplated. If the work of *creation* is referred to, we say, God has *creative* power; if the work of continuing existence to things before created, we say, he has a *preserving* or *sustaining* power. With reference to *miracles*, we say, he has *miraculous* power. But if we speak of what are properly called *physical* effects, that is, effects taking place in material substances and of a *material nature*, we cannot ascribe them to a proper physical power in God, because he is not a physical or material being. But though a spiritual, and not a physical Being, he creates physical substances, and endues them with physical properties; that is, he produces physical effects. For example; it would be improper to say that God has a *magnetic power;* but we say, he creates the magnet, and endues it with its appropriate power.

But we must carefully guard against conceiving of God's power, as made up of different parts corresponding to the different effects produced — one part accomplishing this work, and another that. The right position is, that God is one and the same, a pure Spirit, uncompounded and infinite. But this one Being performs an endless variety of works — produces an endless variety of effects. Of course, he has power to do so. And this is only saying, God acts, or puts forth his power in such a variety of ways. In every case, the operation of God's power is perfectly suited to the end in view; and when it relates to things already existing, its operation is suited to the nature of those things in which the effect is produced.

The doctrine which I maintain is, that *regeneration is the special work of God;* in other words, *that it is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

The evidence which supports this position is abundant. The

Digitized by Google

word of God, which is our only infallible guide, teaches us that believers have experienced the mighty power of God — the power which raised Christ from the dead; that they are his workmanship; that they are born of the Spirit; that he creates in them a new heart, turns them from sin, and makes them holy; that he gives them repentance and faith, enlightens them, purifies them, and works in them to will and to do. It is the doctrine of Scripture, that holiness, in all its branches, is, from first to last, produced in Christians by the energy of the Holy Spirit. It is all attributed to him as the efficient cause. There is no intimation that the power which renews the heart or causes holiness, is partly God's and partly man's. Every cause but one is expressly excluded. It is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*." Paul and other inspired writers take special care to impress it upon our minds as a matter of great consequence, that every part of sanctification, while it takes place in man as an intelligent, moral, active, and accountable being, is strictly *of God*.

This is a very plain and simple view of regeneration. We contemplate holiness at its commencement in the heart of man — holiness as an active *principle*, an *affection*, and a *life*. Of this God is the cause. The divine agency in this new spiritual creation is as obvious and as easy to be understood, as in the creation of the world. We look upon the heavens and the earth, which once were not, but now are, and we ascribe their existence to God. He made them. He caused them to be. In this case, the things done are material and unintelligent; in the other, moral or spiritual. But they are equally from God. Holiness in fallen man, both in principle and in action, results as really and as entirely from the effectual operation of God, as any object in the natural world. Hence the manifest propriety of the language of Scripture, which sets forth the renewal of sinners by the Spirit as a creation, a causing of the light to shine, and a resurrection of the dead. Hence too we see that the honor of renewing sinners is due to God, as really as the honor of creating the universe. This is acknowledged by all Christians in their prayers, and is

Digitized by Google

impressed more and more deeply on their hearts in proportion as they grow in grace and in the knowledge of divine things.

To any who doubt whether the renewal of sinners is owing to the agency of God, I have one additional remark to make. Tell me then how the word of God could more clearly teach this doctrine? By what forms of speech could it more fully satisfy you, that the doctrine is true? You will find that Scripture teaches the doctrine in all the ways most adapted to convince us of its truth. Our conclusion then must be, that the sacred writers could not have taught it more clearly, or affirmed it more strongly, if they had really intended to set it before us as a primary and essential article of our faith.

In regard to the work of God in the regeneration of sinners, there are several points which I would particularly impress upon your minds.

1. This work of God manifests *great power*. Thus it is represented by the Apostle Paul. He speaks of the exceeding greatness of God's power towards believers. But why is this represented as an instance of *great power?* I answer; on account of *the greatness of the effect* produced. On this principle we form our apprehensions of divine power in other cases. If we think of God as creating the mountains, the ocean, the world, and the heavenly bodies, we are impressed with the greatness of his power. We judge of the degree of the power exercised, by its effects, whether those effects are of one kind or another. Consider then the renovation of fallen man. To make one sinner holy — to give spiritual life to one who is dead in sin — to prepare for heaven one who is fitted for destruction, is a remarkable work. Extend your thoughts then to a large number of conversions. Contemplate those who constituted the Corinthian church. They were delivered from the base and abominable passions which once held them in bondage, and were filled with the fruits of the Spirit. Then go further, and think of the multitude which no man can number, out of every nation and people under heaven, saved from sin and eternal ruin, and made holy and happy for ever in the kingdom of Christ. How vast the

Digitized by Google

power of God which accomplishes this work! What a display of omnipotence!

We also judge of the greatness of the power exercised in any case, by the greatness of the *obstacles* which are overcome. The conversion of sinners is opposed by all that is perverse in their passions and habits; by their entire alienation from God, and their settled enmity against his character and government; by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; by a stubborn will; by an unyielding obstinacy of heart; in a word, by all the active and powerful principles of their depraved nature, excited and strengthened by the influence of the wicked one. These obstacles are such that no convictions of conscience, no fears of misery or desires of happiness, no persuasions of God's ministers, no warnings of his word and providence can overcome them. They bid defiance to the powers of men and angels. To remove all these difficulties, and rise above all these obstacles so opposed to the conversion of sinners; to break the chains which bind them, and deliver them from the iron despotism which oppresses them; to bring them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and make them obedient and happy subjects of his spiritual reign.—to do all this manifests a greatness of divine power, as well as divine mercy, which will be celebrated forever in God's holy kingdom.

2. In the renewal of sinners, the power of God is exercised in a *sovereign manner*. By this I mean, that those who are regenerated, are no more worthy of the divine favor, and are, of themselves, no more inclined to turn from sin, than those who are never regenerated. The reason, therefore, the ultimate reason why they are regenerated rather than others, cannot be found in any attribute of character which they possess or any actions which they perform in their unregenerate state. Their conversion may be connected with favorable circumstances of birth and education, with the faithful labors, prayers and examples of parents and ministers, and with other means of divine appointment. But God does not give them a new heart on account of these privileges, nor on account of any works they have done, or any

Digitized by Google

worthiness they possess; nor does he do it, because they are less ill-deserving than others. God, who is infinitely wise, unquestionably has a reason for all that he does. But in this case, as in many others, the reason of his conduct lies concealed in his own mind. He acts according to his own pleasure; agreeably to the declaration of God to Moses, which the Apostle Paul applies to this very subject: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;" and agreeably to the representation of the same Apostle, that God calls and saves men, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace. Now this doctrine of divine sovereignty, instead of being the subject of complaint, is suited to exert a most important influence, particularly to humble the pride of man, and lay him low in self-abasement, to secure to God all the glory of salvation, and also to show sinners that, how great soever their guilt, they have no occasion to despair of divine mercy.

3. In the renewal of sinners there is a *special* and *supernatural operation of divine power*.

That is special which is uncommon — which is something more than what is ordinary. The effect produced by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, is holiness of heart, and, as the result of this, holy exercises and actions. Now holiness is not common to mankind. To be born again — to love and serve God, is not what generally takes place. And if it should take place generally, as we expect it will in a coming age, it would still deserve to be called *special*, because it would be entirely different from what men would ever possess, if left without this divine influence. The exercise of God's power in producing it would in that case be *special*, as it would be different from any exercise of his power in the unregenerate. It would imply, as it does at present, a new moral creation in every true convert. From this view of the subject it would seem, that a *special* operation and a *supernatural* operation are expressions of nearly the same import. The objections of Dr. Emmons to this use of the word *supernatural* in relation to this subject, arose from his giving it a meaning different from its usual meaning. And I think the objections which he urges against the supposition

Digitized by Google

of a *supernatural* influence of the Spirit in regeneration lie equally against his doctrine of a *special* influence.

The exact meaning of *supernatural* is, *above what is natural.* To inquire then, whether the operation of the Spirit in regeneration is *supernatural*, is to inquire whether it is *above* what takes place in those who remain in their *natural* state, or whether it produces a disposition or character of mind above what men *naturally* possess. It is the same as to inquire whether holiness is *natural* to men, or whether they are holy by *nature;* that is, whether they are *born* holy.

But we cannot have a just and adequate idea of what is *supernatural* without a more particular and definite conception of what is *natural.*

Now that event is natural which takes place according to the established laws of nature, and merely in consequence of those laws. Thus men acquire the knowledge of different languages, by the use of suitable means, and the diligent exercise of their faculties. Here, all is *natural.* Knowledge comes to them as the result of the laws of their physical and intellectual being. But if they understood different languages and sciences at once, without study, their knowledge would be *supernatural.* But here, I observe, that such an event as the one just mentioned, and all events which transcend our physical and mental faculties and our obligations,—actions done, or events brought about above the laws of nature, as the turning of a river of water into blood, or the knowledge of future events by the prophets — such actions and events are generally styled *miraculous.* They are indeed *supernatural.* But this word, rather than the other, is usually applied in theological writings, and in religious discourse, to the saving work of the Spirit in renewing and sanctifying sinful men, while the other is applied to those visible effects which transcend the powers of nature. *Supernatural* has a more extensive application, being used to designate both classes of events above named, while *miraculous* commonly designates only the last.

It is unnecessary to give, or to attempt to give, a full enumeration of the natural faculties, affections and actions of man. But it

Digitized by Google

will be of use to mention a few, such as conscience, or a power of distinguishing between right and wrong; reason, memory, self-love; and the various affections which belong to the social and domestic relations. These are instances of what is natural to us. They are the common attributes of human nature.

I might mention also various changes in the feelings, habits, and characters of men, which take place according to the laws of our nature. An intemperate man may become sober, and a sober man intemperate; a spendthrift may become penurious, and a penurious man a spendthrift by natural means, and in a natural manner. Whatever results from any faculty, disposition or principle which properly belongs to man, or from the exercise, improvement, or abuse of such faculty, disposition or principle, may justly be considered as *natural.*

If you ask, whether those things which are natural exist or are produced independently of God; I answer, by no means. His agency is universal. He worketh all in all. But in regard to those things which we call natural, God operates in an uniform manner. His agency is conformed to the established laws of nature. It shows itself in those laws. In this way he moves the planets, and causes the grass and the trees to grow, and ordinarily governs the minds of men. Whatever God does in the physical, the intellectual, or the moral world in conformity with the constitution and uniform order which he has established, is to be regarded as *natural.* The effect produced and the operation of the divine cause are both natural.

The question then to be considered is, whether regeneration is a natural event; whether the effect produced, and the operation of the cause producing it, are conformed to the common laws of the intellectual and moral world. Is holiness a natural attribute of man? Or if not, is it acquired merely by natural means? Can its existence in the posterity of Adam be accounted for by the exercise and improvement of any of the powers or principles of action which they possess, or by the use they make, while unregenerate, of the means which God is pleased to grant them?

A satisfactory answer to this question is very obvious. The

Digitized by Google

Scriptures teach that by nature all men are children of wrath. As they are born into the world, they possess only those principles which our Saviour calls "flesh," so that they "must be born again" — must "be born of God," in order to be admitted into the kingdom of heaven. The account which the inspired writers give of the natural character and state of man, implies, that he has within himself no holiness, and no spring of holiness — that all his moral affections are depraved. When the objects of religion are distinctly contemplated by unregenerate man, feelings of dislike will be excited. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." The divine character and the various truths of religion, presented as clearly and impressively as possible to the view of the natural man, will call forth no right affections. Let his reason be so cultivated that he will "understand all mysteries and all knowledge;" let his conscience be roused from its slumbers, and speak to him faithfully of the evils of his heart and life, and of the judgment to come. All this will fail of subduing his stubborn will, and inducing him to hate sin and love holiness. His natural kindness, sympathy, generosity and gratitude, how much soever they may be strengthened and refined, will not partake in any degree of the nature of holiness. They may be perfect in their kind, and lovely in outward manifestation; but they will make no approximation to real, spiritual excellence.

But you may not be satisfied with these brief and peremptory statements, and may call for arguments to support them. *Why*, you may ask, why may not a change from sin to holiness be brought about by the active principles of the mind, particularly by conscience, reason, and self-love? Surely, it may be thought, a rational being may be influenced by the clear convictions of his reason and conscience to abandon his sins and walk in the way of God's commands, when he is moreover urged to do so by his regard to his own eternal well-being. Why is not this a just and satisfactory view of the subject?

When we enter on a serious consideration of this subject, we

Digitized by Google

are met with the appalling fact, that the feelings and conduct of unconverted men are by no means governed either by the convictions of reason and conscience, or by a regard to their own highest interest. If it were the case, that as soon as men are convinced by their own reason and conscience, that it is their duty to love and obey God, and that their present and future happiness requires them to do this, — if as soon as they come to have this conviction of duty, they would actually love and obey God, it would show that their hearts are right. It would make it manifest that they are what they ought to be — sincerely inclined to perform their duty, waiting only to know the will of God, and ready to do it as soon as known, — disposed to pursue the course which will secure their own eternal happiness. What higher praise than this can any rational beings deserve? To bring men to this desirable state, that is, to influence them to conform in their affections, purposes and conduct to the dictates of enlightened reason and conscience, and to do habitually what will contribute to their highest good through the whole of their existence, is the very thing which the Holy Spirit accomplishes by his regenerating and sanctifying influence. To suppose that men, while unrenewed, possess an obedient disposition, or that they are ever persuaded by their desire for happiness to conform to God's spiritual law, is contrary to the teachings of Scripture and experience. What is the testimony of those who have been born of God after arriving at adult years? Look back to the time of your first serious consideration. Did not conscience admonish you of the wickedness of living without God? Had you not a clear and painful conviction, that endless ruin would be the consequence of neglecting your duty, and that repentance, faith and obedience was the only way to secure the happiness of your souls? But did any admonitions of conscience, any persuasions of reason, or any excitement of desire or fear ever influence you to repent and obey the gospel? Did you not often feel this very thing to be your condemnation, that while you knew the will of God, you did it not? — that your heart was so perverse and obstinate that it would not give up the love of sin and submit to the authority of God, though urged to it by the

Digitized by Google

strongest conceivable motives? And were you not compelled to acknowledge, that your spiritual disease was so deep and inveterate, that no arguments of reason, no convictions of conscience, no cravings of self-love, no hopes or fears, no means or efforts would afford a remedy, and that there was no help for you but in the sovereign mercy of God? And when you reflect upon what you consider to have been your regeneration, do you admit the idea, that it resulted from the natural influence of motives acting on your unregenerate hearts, or from any efforts you were excited to make? On the contrary, are you not satisfied that the saving change, if produced at all, was produced by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, and that the good effect which rational motives at length exerted upon you, was owing altogether to the inward operation of divine grace?

And what does your present experience teach? Do you find your convictions of conscience and your desires of happiness and of holiness sufficient, even now, to overcome the law of sin in your affections, and to keep you steadily in the way of life? Have you not been taught the humbling truth, that your heart is still deceitful, earthly and selfish, and that, without the constant work of the sanctifying spirit, it will yield no obedience to the will of God? Is it not more and more your practical conviction, that you are not sufficient of yourselves to do any thing as of yourselves, and that all your sufficiency is of God? — that instead of relying upon your resolutions, or upon the dictates of reason and conscience, or upon the impulses of self-love, or upon the power of free agency, your reliance must be upon the all-sufficient grace of Christ, and that unless you are continually sanctified and strengthened by that grace, you will go astray from the path of duty, and relapse into the pollution and wickedness of your natural state? Is it not then evident, that neither means, nor motives, nor any of the powers of man have any efficacy to restrain you from sin, or to secure your continuance in the way of holiness? And if they have no efficacy with those who are already sanctified in part, how much less can they be supposed to have efficacy with those, who are wholly under the dominion of sin! If

Digitized by Google

any unregenerate man supposes that the power of reason, conscience and self-love is sufficient to take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh, and to produce cordial obedience to the law of God; let him make the trial, either upon his fellow creatures, or upon himself, and see whether the results of the trial will not correspond with the doctrine of Scripture.

Most of the prevalent mistakes in regard to the subject before us, manifestly arise from an incorrect or inadequate notion of human depravity. Wishing to obviate these mistakes, I shall just call your attention to the following positions, which it would be no difficult matter to support.

Our depravity does not *primarily* and *essentially* consist in any disorder of the faculty of reason or conscience, or in any inactivity or weakness of self-love. These things may flow as consequences of moral depravity, but they do not *constitute* depravity. *Our depravity essentially consists in the disorder of our moral nature* — in a wrong disposition — in a desperately wicked heart, from which sinful feelings, purposes and actions proceed.

3. There is no established connection between any supposable exercises of our natural reason, conscience or self-love, and the removal of this moral disorder. Reason and conscience may be convinced of the excellence of holiness, and strongly approve of it; but they cannot cause its existence. They may condemn a proud, rebellious heart; but they cannot sanctify it. Self-love may aspire after happiness — a happiness suited to the inclinations of the unrenewed heart; but it does not seek a pure and holy happiness, and it cannot prepare the sinner to enjoy it.

I have mentioned reason, conscience and self-love as the chief principles which can be supposed to bear upon the present subject. The result of the whole investigation is, that man has a moral disorder which cannot be remedied by any active principle in his mind, or by any exertions he can make in his unrenewed state; that in order to his loving and enjoying God, he must be born again. This new birth is not necessary to any change which may spring from principles natural to the human mind. A man need not be born again in order to change from intemperance to sobrie-

Digitized by Google

ty, or from ignorance to knowledge, or from indolence to industry. These and other like changes imply no new moral principle, and may be brought about by the exercise and improvement of man's natural powers and dispositions. But holiness is a new principle, and cannot be traced to any thing in man as its proper source. It must come from the new-creating energy of the Holy Spirit.

The following quotations from Edwards' Treatise on the Affections are perfectly coincident with what I have advanced on the nature and necessity of a supernatural influence in regeneration. "It is evident," he says, "that those gracious influences which the saints are subjects of, and the effects of God's Spirit which they experience, are entirely *above nature*, altogether of a different kind from any thing that men find within themselves by nature, or only in the exercise of natural principles; and are things which no improvement of those qualifications or principles that are natural — no advancing or exalting of them to higher degrees, and no kind of composition of them, will ever bring men to; because they differ from what is natural and from every thing that natural men experience, not only in degree and circumstances, but also in *kind;* and are of a nature vastly more excellent. And this is what I mean by supernatural."

"From hence it follows that in those gracious exercises and affections which are wrought in the minds of the saints through the saving influences of the Spirit, there is a new inward perception or sensation, entirely different in its nature and kind from any thing they were ever the subjects of before they were sanctified." "And if there be in the soul a new sort of exercises — which the soul knew nothing of before, and which no improvement, composition or management of what it was before conscious of, could produce, — then it follows that the mind has an entirely new kind of perception or sensation; and here is, as it were, a new spiritual sense, and something is perceived by a true saint in the exercise of this new sense — in spiritual things, as entirely diverse from any thing that is perceived in them by natural men, as the sweet taste of honey is diverse from the ideas men have of honey by only looking on it. — And because this new spiritual sense is im-

Digitized by Google

mensely the most noble and excellent, and without which all other principles of perception and all our faculties are useless and vain; therefore the giving of this new sense, with the blessed fruits and effects of it in the soul, is compared to raising the dead, and to a new creation."

"The Spirit of God, in all his operations upon the minds of natural men, only moves, impresses, assists, improves, or in some way acts upon natural principles; but gives no new spiritual principle. — Here is nothing supernatural and divine. But the Spirit of God in his spiritual influences on the hearts of his saints, operates by infusing or exercising new, divine, and supernatural principles."

Digitized by Google

LECTURE LXXXVI.

REGENERATION NOT OWING TO ANY THING IN FALLEN MAN.

After all that has been said to show that holiness cannot spring from the operation of man's natural principles, some one may say, I am not yet satisfied. The arguments presented on the subject may be plausible; but they do not appear to me conclusive, — especially in regard to self-love. I admit that man is naturally depraved — that he is worldly, selfish, and alienated from God. But if he is convinced that a sinful, ungodly life will end in disappointment and ruin, and that repentance and obedience are essential to true and permanent happiness; why may not his natural desire for happiness, by its own proper influence, lead him to relinquish his sinful pursuits, and to devote himself to the service of God? Why may he not be persuaded to give up his mistaken way of seeking happiness, and henceforth seek it by a life of obedience to the gospel? — just as a man who is supremely desirous of honor, and has been seeking it by flattering the vices of his fellow-creatures, may be convinced of his mistake, and may determine to seek it by more just and more successful means. Why may not a man be induced to forsake sin, though he loves it, for the sake of that happiness which he supremely loves? Why may not a serious regard to his own eternal welfare be sufficient to induce him to become a follower of Christ?

In reply to these inquiries I offer the following remarks.

1. The desire of happiness in the minds of different men is not one and the same thing, but exists in a great variety of forms.

Digitized by Google

In the sensualist, it is the desire of sensual indulgence; in the ambitious man, it is the desire of honor and promotion; in the covetous man, the desire of money; in the benevolent and sanctified man, it is a desire for perfect holiness, for the enjoyment of God, and for the happiness of his fellow-creatures. These are some of the forms in which the love of happiness shows itself among men. And when it is said, mankind have a natural love of pleasure, or desire for happiness, no one can determine merely from the language employed, whether the desire spoken of is of one kind or another. The happiness desired is the gratification of some inclination, and varies as the inclination varies. There are many cases in which the pleasures desired by different individuals stand in direct opposition to each other. They who heartily love their neighbor, will enjoy pleasure in his prosperity; whereas to others, who entertain malevolent feelings towards him, his prosperity would occasion pain. Hence the particular kind of enjoyment which any one desires is a sure index to his character.

2. It is often the case, that a desire for pleasure of one kind has no connection with a desire for pleasure of another kind. In some cases, such a connection evidently exists. Thus a man's love of riches may be closely connected with his love of honor or sensual indulgence, as the possession of riches may contribute to his honor or sensual pleasure. Other instances of a similar connection among the objects of desire might be mentioned. But there are cases where no such connection is supposable, and where the objects of desire are not only unlike, but opposite in their nature, and are consequently incapable of coalescing with each other, or of being in any way subservient to each other. For example, the welfare of others, which is the object of benevolence, is directly opposite to their degradation and suffering, which is the object of malevolence. A desire for one of these objects is exclusive of a desire for the other. And the gratification of one of these desires excludes the gratification of the other.

Now apply this principle to the case under consideration. The self-love of unrenewed sinners, or their desire of happiness is not

Digitized by Google

a holy desire. As it actually exists in those who are destitute of love to God, it is *selfishness*, which is always considered as sinful. The pleasure which they desire is a selfish pleasure. The good which they crave is a selfish good. Their desire is not a general, indefinite desire, which seeks pleasure of any kind, not caring what sort of pleasure it is. Their desire is definite, reaching after a particular kind of gratification, a gratification which is correspondent with the predominant inclination of a depraved heart. The real question to be solved is then the following: — Can the desire of selfish, sinful pleasure, — which is the only desire of pleasure which a man has in his natural state, — produce a desire of an opposite character — a desire for benevolent, holy enjoyment? Or let it be stated thus: Can any excitement or modification of a selfish desire transmute it into a benevolent desire; or can any excitement or modification of a sinful desire transmute it into a pure and holy desire?

It may be said, that the self-love, or desire of happiness, which belongs to man in his natural state, and which is supposed to be the means of his renovation, is not a selfish, sinful desire; that it necessarily belongs to every intelligent being, and is neither morally good nor evil; and that this self-love, which is in itself innocent, may be so enlightened and directed, that the sinner, under its salutary influence, will forsake his wicked ways and choose a life of obedience.

I grant that man in his natural state, has appetites and desires, which, in themselves considered, are both innocent and useful; and that a simple desire for gratification, being common to all intelligent beings, is no part of man's depravity. But self-love, as it actually exists in unrenewed man, is not the same affection as would exist in him if he were holy. If he were holy, his self-love would be under the guidance and control of a higher principle, and so would be just and impartial, and in all its actings would be subservient to the love of God. Thus regulated, and thus combined with a higher affection, love to one's self and to one's own enjoyment, would be sanctified; it would be a consecrated thing; and all its operations would be to the glory of God. But

Digitized by Google

there is nothing like this in the mind of the unrenewed sinner. Being without the high and controlling influence of love to God, his self-love becomes supreme. And supreme self-love is *selfishness*. And if any thing in the human mind is sinful, supreme love of self is sinful; and it is also the fruitful source of many other forms of iniquity. Supreme self-love is directly opposed to the authority of God, and is a transgression of both the precepts which Christ lays down as comprehending the whole moral law. Those precepts require us to love God with all the heart, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The unregenerate man does neither. He neither loves his Creator, nor his fellow-creatures, but sets up himself and his own personal interest as the supreme object of his affection. Even if it were otherwise — if his self-love were indifferent in its nature; still it could no more be the means of changing the heart, than the appetite of hunger or thirst. That which is destitute of holiness cannot be the source of holiness. But we have seen that self-love in the unrenewed is not neutral — is not free from sin. Existing where the love of God is wanting, it is supreme love of self; and supreme love of self is self-idolatry. And if this is not sin, what is?

The question then returns; *whether supreme self-love, or selfishness, can be an effectual motive to holiness, or a means of exciting supreme love to God?* Or it may be expressed thus: *Whether self-love, or such a desire of happiness as exists in the unregenerate sinner, may have an influence to produce a saving conversion, without the special operation of the Holy Spirit?*

Here then consider self-love simply as a *motive* — a motive within the mind. And who knows not that an action is according to the inward motive which prompts it? If the motive is right, the action to which it leads is right. If the motive is wrong, so is the action resulting from it. If the motive is of an indifferent kind, neither good nor bad, and no motive of a moral nature is combined with it, then the act resulting from it must be indifferent too. The great motive operating in the unrenewed sinner is self-love, or a desire of his own personal enjoyment. This self-love, as it exists in him, is exclusive of love to God, and so is supreme

Digitized by Google

self-love; and this is manifestly an affection in direct opposition to both the first and the second precepts of the law. And whatever such a motive may prompt — whatever may result from it, must be regarded in the same light. This principle is universally admitted. Whatever a man's outward actions, his volitions, or determinations may be, they must be considered as corresponding with his motive.

Suppose the strength of this motive increased. Suppose the sinner's dread of misery and desire of happiness to become very intense. What will be the consequence? I reply. This increase of strength alters not the nature of the affection. It is still supreme self-love, and will exert its increased power to maintain its supremacy in the soul. Surely it will not be more ready to resign its throne because its strength is augmented.

Suppose then its strength is *diminished*. What will be the consequence of this? Will self-love, will a sinner's desire of happiness, have more influence to turn him from his wicked ways, because it has lost a part of its power, and acts feebly? Will a sinner who cares but little for his own eternal happiness, be more likely to repent and enter on a life of obedience, than one whose regard to his own personal good is awakened to a high degree of earnestness?

Some seem to think that the selfish principle in the unregenerate sinner may at times be suspended, and that other principles, particularly natural or constitutional self-love, may take advantage of such suspension, and induce the sinner, for the sake of his own good, to turn from sin and embrace the gospel offer. By the suspension of the selfish principle must, I suppose, be intended its ceasing for a time to act; as the affection of a parent ceases to put forth any sensible actings when its object is not present to his view. In this sense, the most selfish person may sometimes have his thoughts so completely occupied with other things, that the particular objects of selfish regard will be absent from his mind, and of course will excite no selfish feelings. Now suppose this to be the case. It does not imply that the selfish principle is eradicated, or even weakened. After its temporary

Digitized by Google

sleep, it may awake with new power, and in pursuit of its appropriate interests may be more active than ever before. If a selfish person should suppose that he has ceased to be selfish, because his selfishness does not now manifest itself by any visible actions; he would discover his mistake as soon as any object suited to awaken his latent disposition, should be presented before him; and he would find that any better principle which had gained, or seemed to gain a temporary ascendancy, would soon yield to the dominant principle. How groundless, then, how utterly fallacious is the supposition, that a man's reason, or conscience, or a regard to his own well-being, can take advantage of the suspension of selfishness to turn his heart to the love of God! Surely the heart is not to be regenerated by any such stratagem as this.

Take then the good which self-love seeks, as an *objective* motive. Can this influence an enemy of God to become his friend? I do not ask whether it can influence him to perform external actions which have an appearance of piety, but whether it can gain the love of the heart? And this resolves itself into the question, whether a *sinful* object of love can influence him to love a *holy* object; whether a selfish interest or pleasure can be so contemplated by an unrenewed sinner, as to be the means of bringing him to love a benevolent interest and to desire a pure and spiritual pleasure.

In regard to all such subjects as have been touched upon, there is a common principle, well known and generally acknowledged, namely, that every disposition or affection of the mind, instead of doing anything to destroy its own influence, will, according to the ordinary laws of the mind, continually acquire new strength by exercise. This will always be the case, unless a superior power interposes to control the natural principles of our intelligent and moral nature. Accordingly any direction which can be given to self-love, or any use which can be made of it, either taken by itself, or combined with reason and conscience, in the mind of a totally depraved sinner, will have no tendency to deliver him from the dominion of sin. And is it not exceedingly

Digitized by Google

strange, that any man who enjoys the light of revelation, and feels any serious regard to its instructions, should labor to evade or obscure our entire dependence on God, and to account for the change of a sinner's heart by the operation of his natural powers and inclinations, and that instead of ascribing the work of spiritual renovation wholly to the Divine Spirit, he should give the honor of it primarily, or at least partly, to the sinner himself!

I have thus endeavored to show, that the renewal of the heart in man cannot result from the exercise of any of his natural faculties or dispositions, nor from the influence of rational considerations, nor from the increase of intellectual light or speculative knowledge, nor from any means used or any efforts made in a state of unregeneracy; that it does not result from any influence within the compass of those laws which belong to our intellectual or moral nature in its present degenerate state; that we have no resource within ourselves from which the renovation of the heart can proceed; and consequently that it must be traced to a supernatural cause.

But whether this can be made certain by any reasoning of ours, or not, it is taught with great clearness by the word of God. And the course of thought which we have pursued will at least prepare us to understand more fully the various texts which relate to the subject, and to receive their meaning more readily.

The doctrine is evidently implied in the representations which the Scriptures make of the natural character and condition of man. Man has destroyed himself. His heart is desperately wicked. He cannot even apply to the Saviour, unless he is drawn of the Father. Representations of this kind abound in the Scriptures; and they all show, that the remedy for man's spiritual disease cannot be found in himself.

The same doctrine is implied in those texts which set forth the provision made for our renovation. Divine grace has introduced a new dispensation, an essential part of which is the mission of the Holy Spirit to recover alienated man to the worship of God; to give him a new heart, and to work in him repentance, faith, and obedience. Now why has God sent the Holy Spirit to accom-

Digitized by Google

plish this work, if man is able to accomplish it himself? Why this gracious provision for our moral renovation, if we have within ourselves what is necessary to bring it about?

That the power which regenerates man must be supernatural, appears also from the account which the Scriptures give of the change itself. They teach that Christians are born again — created anew — raised from the dead; — that whereas they were blind, now they see; — that all things are become new. It is, indeed, true, that these representations are mostly metaphorical. But what is the design of metaphors, but to convey the sentiment intended more clearly and forcibly than could be done by any other language? The metaphors referred to came from those who were awake to the importance and greatness of the change which is necessary to salvation, and who wished to convey to others the vivid impression they had in their own minds. The inspired writers must have employed language adapted to make known the exact truth; and of course the change produced in regeneration must answer to the obvious design of the metaphors by which it is set forth. For example, the metaphorical representation, that believers are born again, and raised from the dead, must imply, that they have a new moral existence; that they have entered on a new mode of being; that they are the subjects of a spiritual life, of which they were wholly destitute before; that they are really and permanently alive unto God. It may be inferred from these representations, that the change cannot originate from anything in man. But other texts settle the matter at once, by expressly ascribing the change to a supernatural cause. They teach that believers "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," — of God exclusively of all other causes. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us," i. e. made us alive. "Ye are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Accordingly, if any man is renewed, he is renewed by the Spirit of God. If any man is turned from sin, it is God who hath turned him. If any one differs from the unconverted world, it is

Digitized by Google

God that maketh him to differ. Holiness in man springs from the divine influence.

In the whole course of my reasoning on this subject, I aim at one result. I wish to produce in your minds a deep conviction, that holiness will never result from any disposition, principle, or effort of unregenerate man; that there is no prospect of the conversion of any human being from the mere operation of his reason, conscience, or self-love, or from the mere influence of any rational motives; that salvation is wholly of God; and that in respect to the accomplishment of this great work, our reliance must be, "not on him that willeth nor on him that runneth, but on God that showeth mercy."

The truth of the doctrine I have endeavored to defend, is confirmed by the history of the Church. Look at the time when our Saviour appeared on earth. Jesus taught the truths of religion in the best possible manner, and established his authority as the Messiah by the most striking miracles. But what was the effect of his ministry? Why was it that such instructions, and the exhibition of such benevolence, wisdom, and power, did not win the hearts of the Jews? There was the best system of means. There was "God manifest in the flesh." There was a person who could say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also." But what was the effect of his ministry? In regard to those who remained unregenerate, it was this, — that in proportion as they became acquainted with his character and the nature of his kingdom, their enmity increased. He expressed this dreadful fact when he said, "Ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father." As to the few who became his disciples, they had been given him and drawn to him of the Father. The *unbelieving* Jews showed the fruits of unrenewed nature, and the effect produced upon it by the best external means. True *believers* showed the fruits of the gracious influence of the Spirit.

The same was true as to the ministry of the apostles. Wherever they went, and however faithfully they preached the gospel, nothing effectual was done towards the renewal of sinners, except by that divine power which raised Christ from the dead.

Digitized by Google

The truth of this doctrine is supported not only by the general history of past ages, but by the consciousness and recollections of the most eminent Christians. I shall refer to a few individuals of this class.

The account which Augustine gives of his own conversion shows that the renewal of the heart is effected by the supernatural agency of the Spirit. He had long and distressing convictions of sin; and under the influence of natural conscience, fear of punishment, and desire of happiness, he was roused to various and earnest efforts to repent and turn to God; but found himself disappointed and baffled by the invincible corruptions of his heart, and was at last brought to despair of relief from any resources of his own.

Halyburton was an eminent minister of Scotland, and Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews near the beginning of the last century. Besides several works of distinguished ability and usefulness, he left a particular and most interesting account of his own religious experience, which Dr. Watts earnestly recommends. "Here," he says, "you may see the crooked and perverse workings of a carnal heart in a state of nature; the subtle turnings of the old serpent to keep the soul from God, and all the counter workings of sovereign grace, which in the end appears victorious." "Here Halyburton describes the utter insufficiency of all convictions, and awakening words and providences, all tears and repentances, all religious duties, all vows and promises, covenants and bonds; and how sin triumphed over them all. All these left him still under guilt, under the power of sin, and near to despair, till it pleased God to open his eyes to behold the mercy of the gospel, as a way of holiness and peace; till divine grace brought him, as a dying sinner, empty of all good, and helpless, to a full salvation that is in Christ, and sweetly constrained him to receive peace and holiness together." Watts then adds: "Though I dare not confine the workings of the blessed Spirit, who is infinitely free and various in his operations, yet it is my judgment that such a conversion as this author experienced, is always more frequent where the gospel is made known in its purest light and its divinest glory, and seems to be more akin to the spirit of Christianity."

Digitized by Google

Halyburton says of himself: "Woful experience obliges me to acknowledge, to my shame, that I never looked towards the Lord's way, except when he drew me. Though the work of my own conversion was congruous to reason, it was far above the power of nature. I cannot ascribe its rise or progress to myself; for it was what I sought not. I cannot ascribe it to any outward means. There are many parts of it which they did not reach. The strongest failed; the weakest wrought the effect. But the work was carried on by the secret, indiscernible power of him who is like the wind blowing where it listeth. The voice that awakened me was the voice of him who maketh the dead to hear. The work was uniform, though variously carried on through many interruptions, over many oppositions, for a long time, by means seemingly weak—yea seemingly improper and contrary, and suitable for him only, whose way is in the sea, and whose footsteps are not known."

There is scarcely any case among Christians which shows more clearly the nature and the cause of the change which takes place in regeneration, than that of David Brainerd. It is specially evident that the change in him was *supernatural.* The exertions which he made to obtain the spirit of piety were probably as earnest and persevering as were ever made by any unregenerate man. What those exertions were, and what effect they produced, may be learned from his published Diary. His manner of life was regular and full of religion, such as it was. He read the Scriptures, spent much time in prayer and other secret duties, and endeavored to the utmost to bring himself to love and obey God. But his efforts ended in disappointment. And he was fully convinced that there could be no way prescribed, whereby a natural man could, by his own strength, obtain that which is *supernatural.* He at length saw that all contrivances to procure salvation for himself were in vain, and that he was utterly lost. "I saw," he says, "that it was for ever impossible for me to do anything towards helping myself; that let me have done what I would," (that is, while unregenerate,) "it would have had no better tendency than what I did; that my state was for ever

Digitized by Google

miserable for all that I could do, and I wondered I had never been sensible of it before." It was in this state of self-despair, that God was pleased to interpose, and by his effectual grace to renew his heart, to open the eyes of his understanding to see the beauty and glory of the divine character and the way of salvation, and to trust in Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour.

Now if the word of God is true, and if Brainerd's own convictions were true, the change which he experienced did not spring from any power or disposition in his own mind, or from any efforts which he made. He was born again not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. It was a work above the powers of nature, and was wrought by the power that raised Christ from the dead.

The subject of regeneration will be pursued in the next volume.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Princeton University Library
32101 066128248

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google